



WEDNESDAY 27 DECEMBER 1995

A MOST REMARKABLE CHRISTMAS

Peace on earth 50 years ago
page 12

24 PAGE SPORTS SECTION

Comprehensive coverage of
Gateshead's action
Tactical analysis



Power chiefs accused over black-out

State of emergency in Shetlands as blizzards leave thousands cut off

JOJO MOYES AND MATTHEW BRACE

As householders in the north of Scotland spent their third night without power, electricity bosses rejected criticism yesterday that they had failed to deploy enough staff to cope with the chaos caused by the Christmas blizzards. A state of emergency was declared in the Shetlands after the worst storms in living memory.

It had been claimed that Hydro-Electric's skeleton staff, on standby over the holiday period, had been too small to react quickly to the blizzards sweeping the country since Christmas Eve.

Thousands of homes were still without power yesterday as weathermen in the north of Scotland warned that temperatures could drop to minus 20C.

Hundreds of engineers battled to restore power to 5,000

islands' council said the privatised Hydro-Electric was badly prepared for winter emergencies and that staff cuts and increased profits were to blame.

The profit motive has affected the way the company used to operate in the best interests of its customers," said Councillor Roddy Murray (Labour) yesterday.

"Clearly the company no longer has the resources to cope with emergencies," he said. The Labour group will ask islands MP Calum Macdonald to demand an inquiry into the long, cold weekend.

A spokeswoman for Hydro-Electric in Perth said the company linemen were battling against the extreme conditions and were holding emergency meetings every few hours. She said even staff on holiday were taking part in the operation to restore electricity to homes.

But the spokeswoman added that the severe weather had prevented linemen reaching faults in many areas. "We would strongly refute any suggestion that our workforce was not strong enough to cope - it was simply down to the weather," she said.

"In some areas we are having to call on contractors and excavation firms to open roads and allow our men access to power lines. We were prepared for snow over Christmas but the severity has caused serious problems for everyone."

In other parts of the country a man died after a mini-bus in which he was travelling skidded on ice and overturned on the M61 at Bolton, Greater Manchester. His wife suffered serious injuries.

Transport was also thrown into chaos as fresh overnight snow blocked many roads around Grampian and the Highlands, with police warning drivers not to drive unless it was absolutely necessary.

Drivers were also warned not to attempt to travel on the A1 between Berwick-Upon-Tweed and Morpeth in Northumberland because of blizzards. Visibility was down to 100 metres at one stage.

A spokesman for Northumbria Police said: "All the roads around Berwick are dangerous - you are putting your life at risk if you travel on them. The snowploughs have been out for hours but they are losing."

Snow also blanketed the North Yorkshire coast, mainly around the Whitby and Scarborough areas. A Leeds Weather Centre spokesman said snow showers, which are also affecting Lincolnshire and Humberside, would continue throughout today.

Road conditions were deteriorating rapidly in mid and west Wales last night as temperatures plummeted well below freezing. The south of England, which has so far escaped the worst of the weather, was due to be hit by snow last night in East Anglia and London.

The Labour group on the islands



Black-out: Snow blocks the main road between Scarborough and Whitby, across the North Yorkshire moors yesterday

Photograph: Tony Bartholomew

Forgotten nuclear dump sparks alert

TOM WILKIE

Science Editor

Radioactive material may be leaking from forgotten trenches of nuclear waste dumped at the Sellafield reprocessing site during Britain's atomic weapons programme in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The trenches are believed to be the source of "tritium springs" - streams discharging radioactive hydrogen on to the beaches at Sellafield. The trenches were covered over with hardcore and asphalt and are currently used as hard-

standing for construction materials and occasionally to park contractors' vehicles.

The existence of the trenches came to light following inquiries by experts investigating clusters of childhood leukaemia in the area - the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (Comare). But neither Comare, British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) nor the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate was able to say what was contained in the radioactive waste dump.

A spokesman for BNFL said: "The material is mainly low-level waste although we cannot discount the fact that there may be small quantities of solid, intermediate-level waste. We are checking contemporary records."

Government policy is that intermediate-level waste is radioactive that it should be disposed of in a highly-engineered repository at least 600m underground, not in a trench, just a few feet below the surface.

The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate pointed out that when the waste was dumped, the site had Crown immunity.

"We weren't in charge at the time, or the records would be meticulous. It is probable that there were undisclosed sources of radioactivity at other sites.

We do not think it is a desirable situation and are discussing with British Nuclear Fuels what steps can be taken.

Earlier this year, Comare was dismayed to discover that it had not been told about an explosion in a waste shaft at Dounreay, in the north of Scotland, which was suspected of being the source of "hot" radioactive particles on the foreshore. The discovery of the Dounreay explosion

prompted Comare to ask if there were undisclosed sources of radioactivity at other sites. The committee is worried by the lack of information it has received. The current chairman of Comare, Professor Bryn Bridges, of the University of Sussex, said: "Comare is aware of the existence of this trench and is interested in knowing what it contains but has no further information at this time."

Technically, BNFL has legal responsibility for the trenches because it holds the nuclear site licence for Sellafield. But the trenches contain wastes which predate not only BNFL but also the UK Atomic Energy Authority. They were created by the forerunner of the Ministry of Defence's procurement executive.

A Comare member said:

"There is a general trend that can be seen here. Relevant information is not always laid out in front of you in a way you can make sense of. Although it is cock-up rather than conspiracy,

one does find out over a period of time a number of things one would have liked to have known right at the beginning of an investigation."

South Africa floods kill 130

ROBERT BLOCK

Johannesburg

It was a Christmas of death and destruction in KwaZulu-Natal province. At least 130 people were killed in flash floods overnight on Monday when the Umzimkulu river and its main tributary, the Slangspruit, burst their banks due to heavy seasonal rains.

Entire families were swept away with their corrugated iron shacks and meagre possessions when the flood waters hit the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

The victims all lived in the Imbali squatter settlement next to the Elandale black township.

Police divers and rescue teams spent all day yesterday

pulling bodies out of the river, while distraught residents waded through a sea of mud, scouring the rivers and banks for any sign of missing loved ones. The sound of wailing relatives filled the air as the dead, mostly teenagers and children, were pulled out of the river.

The death toll rose as more bodies were washed up or caught on debris as the flood waters subsided. Scores of people were still unaccounted for late yesterday and police expected the numbers of dead to increase overnight. There also fears that more rain last night could make the situation worse.

The flood followed a politically motivated massacre on

the province's south coast on Christmas morning, making this one of the bloodiest holiday periods on record.

Police said at least 17 people, including women and an infant, were burnt, shot or hacked to death by hundreds of rampaging supporters of the mainly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Armed with spears, axes and guns, the Inkatha extremists attacked the Shabashobane settlement, a stronghold of their rivals in President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. The attackers torched more than 80 homes, shooting and stabbing people as they tried to flee the fires.

It was the third massacre in

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Duke doubles his property profits

CHRIS BLACKHURST

The Duke of Westminster, one of Britain's richest men, has almost doubled his profits from "renting out" and developing properties in the past year.

Against the backdrop of a continuing depression in the national property market, the hefty increase is bound to fuel continuing controversy about landlords deriving substantial sums from their tenants.

Latest figures filed at Companies House by the Duke's private company, Grosvenor Estate Holdings, show a rise in annual profits from £1.1m to £2.6m. The account reveal an increase in "net rental and other income" from £2.6m to £3.6m. The company's dividend pay-



signed from the Conservative Party in protest at government plans to reform leasehold law. Under the proposed legislation, long-lease tenants with an

original term of over 21 years could have required their landlords to sell them their freeholds. The Duke was outraged, denouncing the move as "legalised expropriation".

One of his arguments was that non-residents would be given the right to buy and overseas investors and property companies who held leases stood to gain large windfall profits.

He was appalled that Conservatives, whom his family had historically supported - he had succeeded his father in 1977 as chairman of his Chester constituency - should have contemplated interfering with contracts signed between two willing parties.

In the end, after heavy pres-

IN BRIEF

Mandelson hits back

news

Mandelson denies right-wing agenda

PATRICIA WYNNE DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Labour MP and former spin-doctor-in-chief, Peter Mandelson, yesterday hit back at claims that he was preparing a right-wing agenda to ensure the party's success in office.

A welter of criticism from Labour left-wingers and some shadow Cabinet members greeted the leaking of a draft synopsis of a book submitted by Mr Mandelson, MP for Hartle-

pool and close confidant of Tony Blair, to publisher Random House earlier this year.

The synopsis attacked by traditionalists as being far to the right of anything so far considered, gave credit for what the Conservatives have "got right".

With suggested chapters raising issues including co-operation between a Labour government and the Liberal Democrats to ensure a longer-term, stable, left-of-centre government, a cut in the number of Scottish

and Welsh MPs, the abolition of universal child benefit, freeing schools from local education authority control and no-strike deals in the public sector.

When Random House decided not to go ahead with the project, Mr Mandelson, one of the architects of "new" Labour, and co-author Roger Liddle, former Labour defector, SDP parliamentary candidate and Liberal Democrat turned to Faber & Faber, which will publish a different, milder, book,

The Blair Revolution: Can Labour Deliver?, in February.

Critics claimed the document showed Mr Mandelson, the party's former communications chief, trespassing on other spokesmen's territory and called on the Labour leader to rein him in.

Mr Mandelson, a spokesman on the Civil Service and a key player in Labour's election team, said: "This book will contribute to the public's understanding of what new Labour

stands for and its thinking on a range of policy issues. It expounds and enlarges upon party policy. It doesn't contradict it." He added: "With my record I would be the last person to want to do that."

Those of his colleagues who had been "wound up" to react to the book before publication would be "pleasantly surprised" by the finished product.

The book had been written when he was not a frontbencher, but he declared: "Now

I am one I want to continue acting as a politician with a voice of my own in support of party policy rather than as erstwhile spin-doctor and behind-the-scenes media man allegedly pulling the strings. People shouldn't try to have it both ways. They say they want me to come out from the shadows with a voice of my own and then complain the moment I do so."

Mr Mandelson is one of the Labour leader's closest advisers, rated for his strategic brain

IN BRIEF

Mother and child die in house fire

A woman and a two-year-old girl died in a fire yesterday at their home in Llanybyri, near Carmarthen.

The woman's husband was last night being treated in Morriston Hospital, Swansea, for cuts and burns after leaping through a bedroom window and returning to the house through the back door to rescue the couple's two other daughters, four and five.

Police said they were trying to trace close relatives before identifying the dead woman, 24, and the child.

Another View, page 15

Scottish lure

Scotland accounts for three of Britain's top 10 tourist destinations and cities for overseas visitors, according to the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board. London stayed top in 1994 with 11.46 million "staying visits", but Edinburgh came second with 970,000, and Glasgow had 500,000. Birmingham was fourth, followed by Oxford, York, Cambridge and Manchester joint seventh, Bath and Inverness.

Dead girl 'had row'

Mhairi Julian, 16, who was killed on her way home from a pantomime in Kilmarock on 16 December may have argued with a youth on the night of her death, Strathclyde police said. A witness has reported seeing a girl answering to Mhairi's description and a youth having a row outside the Braehead Hotel. Police believe the attack was sexually motivated.

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BACK ISSUES

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Missing girl's father helps in murder hunt

MATTHEW BRACE

The father of the missing French teenager Celine Figard arrived in Britain yesterday to assist police in their search for his daughter's safety crew.

Bernard Figard, a farmer, will appeal for help from the public today as detectives launch a full-scale murder hunt for the 14-year-old accountancy student who disappeared on Tuesday last week. Celine's mother was too ill to travel and stayed at the family home in central France.

Detectives, who are now working on the basis that Celine has been murdered, have doubled the number of officers involved to more than 100 across three constabularies.

Detective Superintendent



Missing: Fears are growing for safety of Celine Figard

Des Thomas, who is leading the investigation, said that he was gravely concerned for the student's safety.

He said: "Celine's father has given us as much information as possible to build up a full background. He is suffering anguish and fear for his missing daughter. We will move heaven and earth to find Celine."

Their daughter had been planning to spend Christmas with her cousin at a hotel in the New Forest, Hampshire, where she worked as a waitress last summer.

She had hitch-hiked from Folkestone in Kent and was offered a lift by an English lorry driver at the Chieveley motorway service station on the M4 near Newbury in Berkshire. Police said the man who picked her up was driving a white Mercedes lorry towing a light grey 38 to 40-ton Thermo King refrigerated trailer. Nothing has been heard of her since and the driver has not come forward.

Det Supt Thomas said: "It is hard to believe the lorry driver has not heard of our appeals but as yet he has not contacted us. There are some very sinister connotations read into that but there are no reasons why he shouldn't call us if he dropped her off as he said he would."

He said he wanted to hear from anyone who was at the service station between 4pm and 6pm on Tuesday last week.

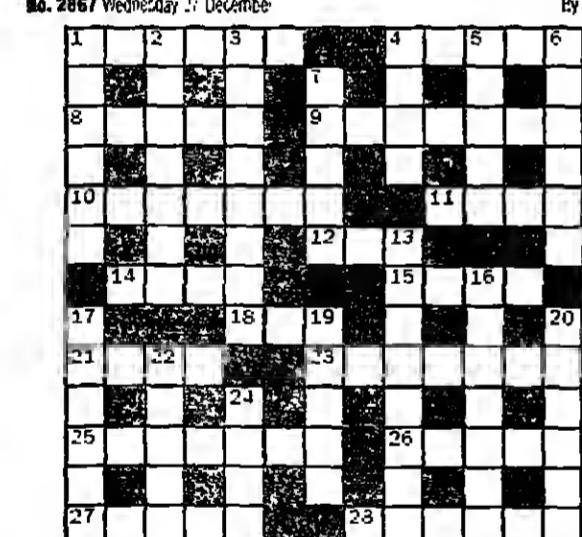


Gritted teeth: Crowds braving the icy North Sea at Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, for the 20th Boxing Day charity dip

Photograph: Mark Runnacles

concise crossword

No. 2857 Wednesday 27 December By Porla



ACROSS

- 1 Eraser (6)
- 4 Farm animal (5)
- 8 Hindu mystic (5)
- 9 Jute cloth (7)
- 10 Tarned hide (7)
- 11 Backside (4)
- 12 Outfit (3)
- 14 Combie (4)
- 15 Curved structure (4)
- 18 Evergreen tree (3)
- 21 Stratagem (4)
- 23 Annoying (7)
- 25 Capital of Iraq (7)
- 26 Spring over (5)
- 27 Dodge (5)
- 28 Determined (6)

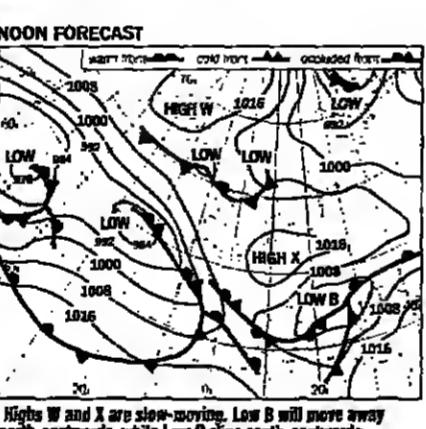
Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

Across: 1 Per, 3 Verse (Perverse), 7 Radiates, 8 Idic, 9 Ejector seats, 10 Mosaic, 12 Entire, 14 Disadvantage, 18 Solo, 19 Lacate, 20 Yield, 21 Day. Down: 1 Placebo, 2 Raise, 3 Visor, 4 Rail, 5 Eclat, 6 Stitic, 12 Eunice, 13 Re-entry, 15 Irony, 16 Valid, 17 Acid.

Notes

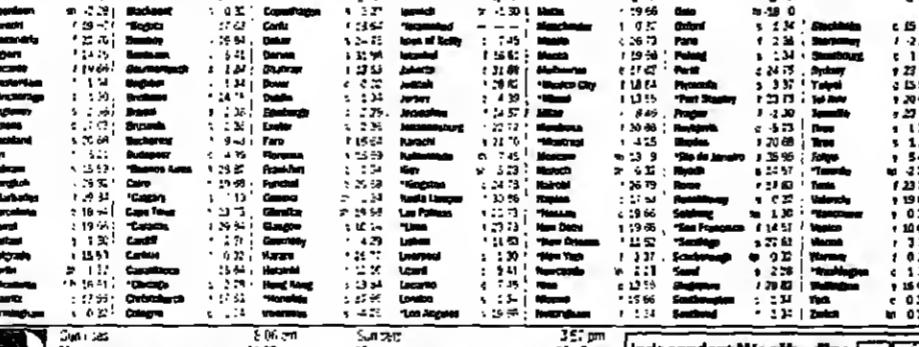
Weather forecast

NOON FORECAST



Highs W and X are slow-moving. Low B will move away north-eastwards, while Low C dips southwards.

WORLD WEATHER



Highs W and X are slow-moving. Low B will move away north-eastwards, while Low C dips southwards.

LIGHTING-UP TIMES

AIR QUALITY

London	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
London	5.37 pm	6.06 pm	6.35 pm	7.06 pm	7.47 pm	8.15 pm	8.46 pm
Brussels	4.07 pm	4.35 pm	4.53 pm	4.81 pm	5.09 pm	5.37 pm	5.65 pm
Paris	3.59 pm	4.18 pm	4.36 pm	4.54 pm	4.82 pm	5.11 pm	5.39 pm
Edinburgh	4.26 pm	4.54 pm	4.82 pm	5.10 pm	5.38 pm	5.66 pm	6.04 pm
Cardiff	4.39 pm	4.67 pm	4.95 pm	5.23 pm	5.51 pm	5.79 pm	6.07 pm
Glasgow	4.39 pm	4.67 pm	4.95 pm	5.23 pm	5.51 pm	5.79 pm	6.07 pm
Belfast	4.03 pm	4.31 pm	4.59 pm	4.87 pm	5.15 pm	5.43 pm	5.71 pm

Outlook for Friday

HIGH TIDES

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Travel wars: Tour operators put new long-haul deals at the forefront of campaign to win business for depressed market

Pay on return plan to woo holidaymakers

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

Holidaymakers were being courted from all sides yesterday, with 15 per cent discounts, low child fares and a special "go now, pay later" charter for bad savers.

Despite a decision within the travel industry to reduce availability by 10 per cent, to avoid last year's price war, the big operators and travel agents are already vying for a larger share of a depressed market.

Airtours fired the latest shot

yesterday by offering 10,000 child fares to Florida for £199 each and £349 two-week fly-drive holidays for adults.

The Airtours move was seen as a bid to grab a bigger share of the growing long-haul market. Industry experts believe that long haul – to North America, India, Thailand, Africa, South America and the Far East – offers the best opportunity for expansion while traditional Mediterranean destinations stagnate.

There is also a growing expectation that the long-haul market will benefit from an un-

expected source – the Government's decision, five years ago, to introduce the Tax Exempt Special Savings Account ("Tessa"). In the first week of January, 4.3 million people will see the first Tessa mature, releasing £25m into the economy. Individual savers are likely to recoup a tax-free £12,000 after investing £9,000.

The money could provide a huge boost to a market down by as much as 20 to 30 per cent on last year.

John Sim, a spokesman for long-haul holiday specialists, Knorr, said: "The timing of

the Tessa money is good news for us. We usually do very well in January and now there are a lot of people around with money they would not normally have." The travel agents' organisation, Abta, described the windfall as a godsend.

Yesterday, Aspro Holidays, another Airtours company, put 5,000 summer Mediterranean holidays on sale from £99, as well as 15,000 "child-goes-free" breaks.

In the high street, Lunn Poly announced the first "go now, pay later" scheme for travel agents. Customers are being of-

fered the chance to make up to four payments up to a year after returning from their holiday.

Peter Povey, Lunn Poly's marketing director, said: "Our research has shown that around one person in four would prefer to spread the cost of their holiday, rather than take a discount."

However, along with rivals Thomas Cook and Going Places, Lunn Poly is offering discounts of up to 15 per cent for those who would like to pay first.

Thomson, Britain's biggest holiday company, said last

post-Budget and with strong early bookings, we expect January sales to top 2 million."

Among the Lunn Poly deals are holidays provided by Manos, Summer Sun, Sunworld Florida, Sunworld Beach Villas and Twenty's.

Destinations range from Mexico (flight and two weeks' accommodation) with First Choice for £692 and Cyprus (flight and one week with Twenty's) for £269, to seven nights in Ibiza with Thomson for £89.10.

Keith Betton, spokesman for the Association of British Travel Agents, said: "The tour op-

erators have reduced capacity by 10 per cent this year in order to increase demand and avoid having to discount as heavily as they did last year.

"Most of the discounts offered at the moment amount to about 10 per cent. It goes silly when they go to 15 per cent, effectively removing all the profits on holidays, other than the margin on travel insurance, which they make their customers buy."

"All being well, the reduction in capacity should result in a more stable industry and more sensible prices."



Beach dream: Goa was found to be cheaper than other destinations

From a hippie haven to a hip destination

The Indian state of Goa was yesterday named as the "best value winter destination" for holidaymakers, despite widespread concern over the environmental impact of its tourism, writes Steve Boggan.

A survey of resorts popular with British holidaymakers found that Goa was cheaper than any other destination for a range of goods and services from food to petrol.

The results of the survey, conducted by Thomas Cook, are likely to stimulate demand further for places along a coastline described recently in a television

documentary as a huge Benidorm in the making. During the BBC2 programme, *Our Man in Goa*, Clive Anderson gave details of chaotic development of 65km of coastline previously regarded as a hippie paradise.

At the time, Tricia Barnett, Tourism Concern's co-ordinator, said: "For several years, Tourism Concern has been telling tour operators about Goa's environmental groups' concerns over the continuing violation of local environmental regulations and people's rights."

Officials estimate that the

number of tourists visiting Goa has increased from 10,000 in 1972 to well over a million in the early Nineties. One reason has been the increased capacity in Goa's main airport, Dabolim, resulting from a runway extension.

Tourism Concern, which has increased its charges on a report from the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests listing widespread and "flagrant" breaches of environmental laws by holiday complexes, blames British tour operators which use the hotels responsible.

Thomas Cook said it was not

trying to stimulate tourism in Goa, but was simply compiling data on costs.

Among its findings, it established that Majorca and the Canary Islands were inexpensive for food; Portugal was cheapest for beer; Tunisia most expensive

for sun lotion and Cuba the most expensive for spirits.

Despite yesterday's results, there is historical evidence to suggest they will not stand for unreasonable price increases. Greece, which used to be Britons' second-favourite short-haul package destination, after

Spain on 5 million, fell last year to 1.1 million and is expected to be overtaken within 18 months by Turkey, which attracted 800,000 Britons last year.

Portugal and Italy, attracting 500,000 and 300,000 each, are next in the short-haul package

league, although France, which attracts many more independent travellers is, in reality, far more popular.

The United States heads the long-haul league, with about 1 million tourists venturing there.

Package holidaymakers: Travellers waiting for flights from Heathrow Airport's Terminal Two yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Nursery vouchers 'put places for three-year-olds at risk'

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Tens of thousands of three-year-olds could be turned away from nursery schools as a result of the Government's plans to provide education for all four-year-olds, figures published today reveal.

Up to 133,000 nursery school places for three-year-olds could be put at risk, according to research carried out by the House of Commons library for Stephen Byers, MP for Walsall and a member of Labour's frontbench education team.

Mr Byers said that the youngest children could be turned away to make room for more four-year-olds under the Government's nursery voucher scheme, which is due to be tested in four pilot areas in 1996 and introduced nationally in 1997.

In order to pay for their promise to give a £1,100 nursery voucher to all parents of four-year-olds, ministers propose to cut local authority grants for the under-fives to less

than half their former level from £263m to £415m. Authorities will have to compete with private nurseries for voucher-bearing children in order to recoup their losses.

The new figures show that 277,000 three-year-olds, about three out of every seven, currently have places in nursery schools or classes. Mr Byers believes that more than half that number will be turned away in future so that the Government can offer comprehensive provision for four-year-olds.

"It is now clear that tens of thousands of places presently provided for three-year-olds will be put at risk due to the Government's nursery voucher scheme. These figures show why Gillian Sheppard has consistently refused to safeguard existing provision for three-year-olds," he said.

He said Labour's proposals for nursery education, due to be introduced in the new year, would be realistic and deliverable. "The party would offer the entitlement of a free nursery place for every three- and four-year-old whose parent wanted it," he added.

According to the new figures, 6,580 full-time places would be at risk in Birmingham, and more than 6,000 in Cleveland and Leeds. A further 14 authorities could each lose more than 3,000. Birmingham currently has 10,500 three-year-olds in nursery education while Cleveland and Leeds each have 7,000. The analysis calculates the number of places which can be provided with the grant left to each local authority once the voucher scheme has been financed.

The voucher scheme, which includes £165m of new money in addition to £548m clawed back from local authorities, has already attracted a great deal of criticism because it will divert money from local authorities to private nurseries. Mrs Sheppard, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, was reluctant to run the scheme because she believed it would be unwieldy and bureaucratic, but she was overruled by the Prime Minister and his Downing Street think-tank.

Objections from the Treasury – which was reluctant to subsidise parents who were already paying for private places – were also brushed aside.

Ministers had planned to run a pilot scheme in 12 areas but only four local authorities – Norfolk County Council and the London boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Wandsworth – have agreed to take part.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education and Employment said that the claw-back from local authorities was based on the number of four-year-olds for whom they currently provided places, so three-year-olds should not be affected.

"There is no reason why provision for three-year-olds should be affected by the nursery-education voucher scheme for four-year-olds. The funding mechanism proposed ensures that local education authorities will not lose money if they continue to recruit the same number of four-year-olds," she said.

BBC wins seasonal ratings battle

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

The BBC last night claimed victory in the Christmas Day ratings war, squeezing ITV out of all but one of the top 10 viewing positions.

An audience of 16.8 million for *One Foot in the Grave* set a standard which saw BBC1 and BBC2 attract two-thirds of all viewers throughout the day. Only one ITV programme made the top 10, *Coronation Street*, which reached sixth place with 11.3 million.

Ahead of it was an array of BBC programmes. Even where BBC1 and ITV showed the same programme – the Queen's speech – the BBC came out on top, attracting 11.1 million viewers (the eighth-highest audience) compared with ITV's 7.27 million.

Second in the ratings came

with 14.3 million; fifth was the Steven Spielberg film, *Hook*, with 12.1 million; seventh was *Indecent Proposal*, with 11.3 million; ninth was *Noel's Christmas Present*, with 10.1 million; and, in joint 10th position, with 9.3-million viewers each, came *Auntie's Brand New Bloomers* and *Only Fools and Horses*.

A BBC insider said executives were delighted with the results, given ITV's larger budget for blockbuster movies. "Yet again, viewers have shown that the Beeb is their ideal Christmas companion," she said.

The figures relied upon by the BBC are preliminary raw data assessments put together by the Broadcasters Audience Research Board (Barb) and do not take account of video recordings or repeats.

ITV was not in a strong position to argue with the figures.

However, Marcus Planin, the ITV network director, said he

was neither surprised nor dismayed by them, pointing to the network's own victory on Christmas Eve. ITV took a 37 per cent share of the available peak-time audience, compared with 30 per cent for the BBC.

The top evening show on Christmas Eve was *You've Been Framed*, which attracted 10.5 million viewers. According to Mr Planin, it was the first time in years that ITV had beaten the BBC on Christmas Eve.

The BBC always keeps its top programming for the Christmas period and last year BBC1 claimed 53 per cent of the audience on Christmas Eve.

"I'm delighted that we've done more than just given them a run for their money this year. So far, the bonuses are shared over the first two days of Christmas. It's a 1-1."

Neither broadcaster would say how much they had spent on Christmas Day scheduling.

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news

TUC campaign: Dependents of public-sector workers face financial hardship because employers are denying them benefit rights

Unions call for pension rights for partners

NIC CICUTTI

Thousands of dependants of public-sector employees are being denied pensions when their partners die, a report showed yesterday.

Many face financial hardship because employers are denying them the benefit rights paid to surviving spouses because they were not married to their partner, the Trades Union Congress study said.

The TUC yesterday launched a campaign to win the right for "widow" pensions to be paid to a partner, irrespective of marital status or sexual orientation.

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, said: "The social taboos of living together no longer apply and the [pension] schemes are out of touch with social realities. Unless they change their ways, employees will not join a pension scheme, which is not good for our members or the schemes themselves."

The TUC's campaign covers all public-sector unions, including health and local government workers, teachers, fire fighters, and civil servants.

The Police Federation, which

is banned from joining the TUC, is nevertheless backing the campaign, after several cases where a serving officer died on duty but his partner was left with no pension.

Union anger has been heightened by the fact that public-sector pension schemes now lag far behind their private-sector counterparts, many of whose members have enjoyed the right to a pension for years, regardless of whether they are married.

Often, these rights are extended to cover people in same-sex relationships who are then classed as "dependants" and paid the same benefits.

More than 3 million public-sector workers pay into their respective schemes. Based on the Government's own figures the TUC report estimates that some 220,000 people are unmarried partners, a number that is expected to grow sharply in the next decade.

In all cases where staff pay into these pension schemes, the level of their contributions is based on the assumption that - if they are married - their dependants will receive a pension should they die.

Indeed, the schemes assume that 95 per cent of their members are married and charge them accordingly. Because this percentage has been falling for years, schemes are effectively saving money by denying un-

married dependants a pension.

Among the many private-sector schemes that pay out to unmarried partners are British Telecom, Tate & Lyle, Massey Ferguson, British Petroleum, Unilever, Boots the chemist, the John Lewis Partnership and the Automobile Association.

However, attempts by public-sector unions to win the same rights for their members have been spurned by employers.

The TUC said that one of the most important reasons for employers rejecting their claims is the moral one. "There is a clear implication that the Government thinks common-law relationships are not 'proper' and that benefits should not be made available," its report claimed yesterday.

The TUC wants members of public-sector schemes to be able to nominate a partner in an "expression of wish form", as used in many private schemes.



Victims: Angela Clarke and her three-year-old son, George. She is excluded from her partner's police pension. Photograph: John Angerson/Guzelian

'Five years together, but I'm left with nothing'

Angela Clark remembers vividly the day her partner, Gary Freeman, a serving CID officer in Chesterfield, died while on duty, writes Nic Cicutti.

"That morning, he kissed me goodbye as usual, told me that he loved me and went off to work," she recalls. "At about lunchtime the police came round to the house to say that there had been an accident and he was dead."

Mr Freeman was a passenger in a car which was involved in a collision. It was then Ms Clark discovered that, despite having lived with her partner for five years and the birth of their son, George, she would not be entitled to a police widow's pension.

"A member of the Police Federation called and said that I was not eligible because we were not married. Gary had been a serving police officer for 19 years and always paid into his pension scheme."

"Had we been married I would have been entitled to a pension of about £12,000 a year."

"Ironically, we were due to marry but we had been forced to postpone the wedding because I was ill at the time. I still have my wedding dress in the cupboard."

Ms Clark now works part-time as a careers adviser, but would have preferred to remain at home, looking after her son.

"I would have liked to be there to see George growing up. Instead, he goes to a child minder."

"It is immoral that people can be left with nothing because of

a piece of paper. All I have are some wonderful memories of Gary and a beautiful son."

"But the way we have been treated is like all the time we spent together and the love we shared was for nothing."

Despite living together for 10 years, Paul Gerber and his partner, Dorothy Garson, made a conscious decision not to marry. They stuck by their decision even after the birth of their son, Adam, now aged seven, and a five-year-old daughter, Lauren.

"We had always operated together as a family and as partners. We shared all household responsibilities, paid our bills together, and agreed that we did not want the extra complications of marriage," says Paul, who works for the National Society for the Protection of Children.

"Had we been married I would have been entitled to a pension of about £12,000 a year."

"Ironically, we were due to marry but we had been forced to postpone the wedding because I was ill at the time. I still have my wedding dress in the cupboard."

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"I would have liked to be there to see George growing up. Instead, he goes to a child minder."

"It is immoral that people can be left with nothing because of

About two years ago, Dorothy, a social worker in West Glamorgan, was diagnosed as suffering from lymphoma, a form of cancer. She died last summer, leaving Paul to bring up Adam and Lauren on his own.

"Pensions were an issue we never addressed and in any event, in the last few months, Dorothy was so ill we didn't even consider what might happen if she died."

For many years, Dorothy had contributed to a local authority pension scheme. Although her children will receive a small pension until they become adults, the additional amount payable to a married spouse is not payable to Mr Gerber.

"I don't know how much I might have received - the process of grieving means you are not functioning very well. We are obviously far worse off financially than when Dorothy was alive, because our income was halved."

"But it is not really a question of the money. It just seems so unfair that people should be discriminated against and punished after death, simply because they weren't married."

"The irony is that these pension schemes are prepared to recognise non-marriage for the purpose of withdrawing pension benefits from a widow or widower if they begin to cohabit with another partner."

"I feel both angry and hopeless because the only reason our family is not getting what it is entitled to is essentially on moral grounds."



Paul Gerber: 'We had always operated as family'

Perplexed in a world of mice and PCs

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

The voice on the end of the telephone was patient but perplexed: "I've got the foot pedal working, but it doesn't seem to be very sensitive."

Foot pedal? Was the caller describing an electric organ? Fortunately, the person taking the call on the support desk for a computer maker realised that the "foot pedal" was in fact a computer mouse, the handheld device used to move a pointer around the screen.

Similar confused calls are expected throughout this week as computer-makers open their support lines to provide help to the thousands of people who bought personal computers as Christmas presents this year and spent Christmas Day and yesterday trying to understand the manuals.

Compaq, along with other makers such as Dell, IBM, and Apple Computer is offering telephone help to home computer users today and for the rest of the week.

Microsoft, which makes the best-selling Windows 95 operating system, and which will be on about 90 per cent of new computers sold this Christmas, expects up to 1,000 calls today.

The anticipation stems from the fact that retailers have been forecasting record sales of PCs into the home this year. In the week before Christmas, Dixons was expecting to sell more than 10,000 PCs, and mail-order companies have reported excellent business.

"I think part of the problem is that the computer industry loves buzzwords, but the average person can't follow what they mean," said Sue Sorkin, a product manager at Compaq. "We have consciously tried to bring the technical level of instructions down. In fact, we have won some Plain English Awards for them."

"We're expecting the vast majority to be about Windows 95 and how to configure games to run with it," said Microsoft's Steve Caulfield as the lines opened. "Let's be honest, we're not expecting many quer-

tions about [the financial spreadsheet] Excel." His staff of 18 will answer phones from 10am until 5pm.

A "multimedia" computer, capable of playing CD-ROMs and with full-colour screens, sound and a (handheld) mouse, costs about £1,500. But setting it up so that the various components work to best effect is difficult, and has been known to defeat experts, let alone novices, who may find abstruse error messages such as "This program has been terminated because it attempted to perform an illegal operation" - more than a little perplexing.

Compaq, which has never before offered telephone support on Boxing Day, expected thousands of calls - "about the same as a normal work day," according to Ms Sorkin. "But the problem is that the more that you extend the facility, the more people call. The volume of calls from the consumer market is very high." But at least the volume coming from those confusing footpedals and mice should be smaller.



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Cold snap sabotages fox-hunters' big day



On the scene: Protesters confront one of the Boxing Day hunts that did go ahead, at Cowdray Park, West Sussex

JOJO MOYES

Sub-zero temperatures and hunt saboteurs hampered many traditional Boxing Day hunts on the biggest day in the fox-hunting calendar. Hard, ground meant many chases were called off, while police reported that the freezing conditions had kept incidents with animal protesters to a minimum.

The Hunt Saboteurs Association said its members' and those of the League against Cruel Sports disrupted up to 120 hunts. "A fox killed today is the same as one killed any other day. The Boxing Day meeting just serves to make it look like a traditional postcard scene - we see it as a publicity thing for the hunts."

Meanwhile, a bitter verbal

feud erupted between pro- and anti-hunt groups as the League Against Cruel Sports launched a campaign featuring a dying foxhound called Berry, struck by a train during a hunt. Anti-hunt campaigners say it is just one of hundreds of similar incidents caused when out-of-control packs are let loose.

The British Field Sports Society said Berry was filmed by a hunt saboteur who had been blowing a hunting horn to try to lure the hound away from the huntsman's control.

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Stabbed school head is 1995's man of the people

Headmaster Philip Lawrence, fatally stabbed outside his London school, while helping a pupil who was being attacked, was yesterday named Personality of the Year by BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme.

He received 23,130 of the 77,370 votes cast by the programme's listeners.

His widow, Frances, said she was deeply moved by the award although she believed her husband, a 'modest' man, would have been highly embarrassed.

"One realises the dreadful things are in the minority, that most people were appalled at what has happened," she said on the programme.

"That is very comforting because when one is faced with what we were faced with on that Friday night the world becomes an evil place, but now one can see that it isn't - that it is mostly good."

She said the Government had not gone far enough in its response to the tragedy on 8 Dec-



Philip Lawrence: Listeners remembered 'a good man'

personal possession" and back to spirituality.

"It is not enough to get rid of knives. That won't get rid of violence. We have really got to attack it on a much more basic level. The time is long overdue."

The award was welcomed by the head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Basil Hume,

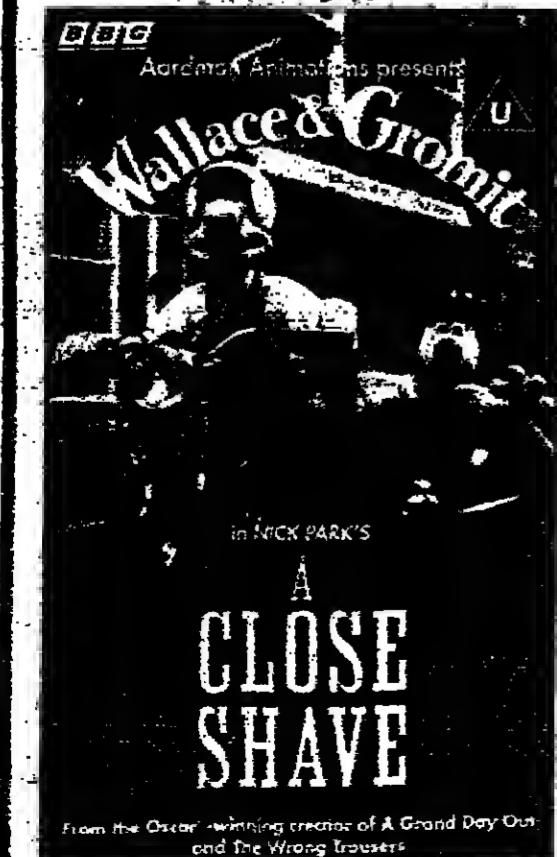
"I am very moved that the personality of the year should be Philip Lawrence," he told the programme. "He was a good husband, a good father, indeed a good man."

Runner-up in the poll, for the second year running, was the Prime Minister, who received 18,260 votes. Assassinated Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was third, the Princess of Wales fourth and the Labour leader, Tony Blair, was fifth.

Harry Greenway, MP for Ealing North, said the Philip Lawrence Memorial Fund now stood at £37,000.

Leading article, page 14

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news

Bosnia peace plan: Nato commander weighs up request for delay in transfer of suburbs for up to a year beyond deadline

Serbs demand more time to quit Sarajevo

EMMA DALY
Pale

The Nato commander in Bosnia, Admiral Leighton Smith, promised yesterday to consider a Bosnian Serb request for a delay in the transfer of Serb-held suburbs of Sarajevo to control by the Bosnian government, as laid down in the Dayton peace plan. But alliance officials said he was unlikely to agree to a substantial postponement of the Dayton schedule.

Momcilo Krajisnik, the official standing in for Radovan Karadzic, who is barred from contact with Nato under threat of arrest for war crimes, spoke at length of "problems" around Serb-held Sarajevo and called for a "solution". The first step, he said, would be to delay the hand-over for up to a year.

Admiral Smith refused the request yesterday, but added: "I told Krajisnik we will take into account all aspects of the agreement and we would hopefully render a decision acceptable to

all. Other than that, no guarantees were made."

The US commander, making his first visit to Pale, the mountain village serving as Bosnian Serb "capital", expressed satisfaction with progress made in the first week by Nato's peace Implementation Force (I-For).

Serbs living in the five suburbs due to revert to government rule have legitimate fears about life under enemy rule. But it is clear that Mr Krajisnik, who signed the Dayton agreement on the Bosnian Serbs' behalf, hopes to circumvent the plan as it pertains to Sarajevo. He described it as "not a just solution". The Serbs signed only under strong pressure from their mentor, President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia.

"I hope the situation will be cleaner very soon and that we shall find a good solution to Sarajevo, and remove one of the basic obstacles to implementation," Mr Krajisnik said in Pale.

"We think that the Dayton agreement must not be put at stake but we think that while

I-For is here, there should be an extension of the transfer of authority in order to bring time to bring a good decision."

Under the plan, both sides are obliged to withdraw front-line positions around the city by midnight tonight, seven days after Nato's arrival on D-Day, 21 December: the Bosnian Serbs are to pull out of the Sarajevo suburbs by "D plus 45" on 3 February. The Bosnian government is not due to take control until "D plus 90" and the Serbs want that 45-day period extended.

As to Mr Krajisnik's request for a delay, which might, he said, be for two, three, five, nine or 12 months, Admiral Smith reserved judgement, pending consultation with I-For colleagues.

"I didn't say yes or no. Anything is possible," he said, emphasising that while he has no power to re-negotiate Dayton, he is authorised to extend the deadlines.

Residents of Ilida, Grbavica, Vogosca, Ilijas and Hadzici, who mistrust Bosnian govern-



Timely request: US admiral Leighton Smith discussing Serb proposals with Momcilo Krajisnik (holding umbrella) in Pale

Photograph: AP

ments promises that all except "war criminals" are welcome to stay, have been preparing for an exodus. Cars and trucks loaded with furniture, factory parts and even a few tin coffins bearing corpses exhumed from the local cemeteries have journeyed towards Pale.

However, the exhumation last week of several graves was something of a publicity stunt. Bosnian Serb officials have acknowledged. Permission for further exhumations has been suspended while Serb officials wait to see if the pressure on I-For pays off.

An extension of the sort that the Serbs want, amounting to a renegotiation of the deal, is highly unlikely, alliance officials say.

"There will be no tinkering with the time-lines - nobody is going to renegotiate the deal," a Nato source said.

Serb power at loggerheads with Pale. But Serb officials persist in pursuing their war goals.

"They would like the boundary between Republika Srpska and the Muslim-Croat Federation, with most Serbs outside Sarajevo, particularly those in Banja Luka, an alternative centre of

Pope beats flu to greet the faithful

VERA HALLER
of Reuters

Rome — A tired-looking Pope John Paul gave his holiday greetings to the world yesterday after his Christmas Day celebrations were disrupted by a bout of influenza.

"Thank you for coming here today and yesterday, thank you so much," the Pope said, speaking from the window of his private apartments overlooking St Peter's Square. "I wish you, in this Christmas season, a special blessing of the Lord." A Vatic

can spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, said the Pope, 75, was feeling better, although he still had a slight fever. "Absolutely nothing has changed on his end-of-year programme," Mr Navarro-Valls said, adding that the Pope's doctor had ordered him to rest for a few days.

Yesterday the Pope appeared at the window to deliver an angelus prayer and blessing. He looked tired as he read slowly; his voice wavered and he stumbled over the words at one point. At the end, he resumed his greetings cut short on Monday when he stopped his *Urbi et Orbi* message to Rome and the world after falling sick.

On Monday the Pope had said "Happy Christmas" in only Italian, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Polish, while he had been scheduled to give the greeting in 54 languages. He also missed Christmas Day Mass in St Peter's after his doctors ordered rest for fever and influenza. It was the first time since he became Pope in 1978 that he had missed the Christmas Mass.

Tired: The Pope yesterday

IN BRIEF

West Bank pull-back goes smoothly

Dahiyeh — With its troop pull-back in the West Bank entering its final phase, Israel handed dozens of villages to the Palestinian Authority in a smooth transfer of power. By the weekend, nearly all Arab residents of the West Bank and Gaza will be under Yasser Arafat's control, ahead of planned elections next month that will bring the Palestinians within reach of their decades-long quest for self-determination. In Dahiyeh, south of Hebron, residents served coffee to the departing Israeli troops and gave them olive branches after 28 years of occupation. AP

Cult bodies go under the microscope

Grenoble — Forensic experts began studying the charred remains of 16 members of the Order of the Solar Temple found last week in a remote French Alpine forest clearing. The post-mortem examination could last several days and will confirm if the bodies are those of eight French and eight Swiss nationals who went missing 10 days ago. Reuter

Colombia air crash looks like human error

Washington — Officials investigating the crash of an American Airlines jet in Colombia have ruled out mechanical trouble or sabotage and believe human error may have been responsible for the crash last Wednesday. Although a final conclusion is probably months away, technicians have inspected two "black box" recorders recovered from Flight 965 and believe operational error was the cause, the *Washington Post* reported. AP

Coalition plans to thwart Turkish Islamists

Ankara — The Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, of the True Path Party, and her main conservative rival, the Motherland Party leader Mesut Yilmaz, have agreed to work towards a coalition to keep the Islamist Welfare Party from power. The Welfare party, led by Necmettin Erbakan, won general elections at the weekend but failed to get enough seats to govern on its own. Reuter



Tansu Ciller: Combined effort

Yeltsin rethinks Russian foreign policy

Moscow — President Boris Yeltsin created a new Foreign Policy Council, a week after parliamentary elections in which Communists and nationalists — who have long opposed the pro-Western stance of the Foreign Ministry — did well. He later met with the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, to discuss possible cabinet changes. Mr Yeltsin left a sanatorium for his country home, where he will continue to recuperate from heart problems. AP

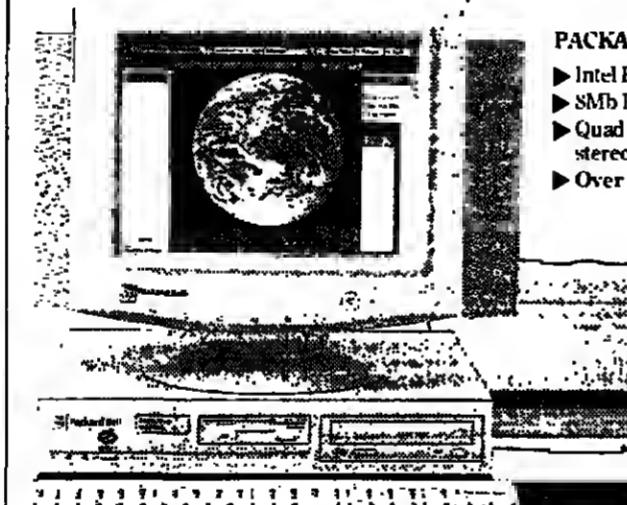
Papandreou in stable condition

Athens — The Greek Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, has overcome a secondary infection that nearly killed him last week, and doctors have described his condition as stable. Mr Papandreou, 76, was rushed to hospital with pneumonia on 20 November. Reuter

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£1249 EX VAT
Intel Pentium 75MHz processor, 8MB RAM, 540Mb hard disk, Quad speed CD-ROM drive, stereo soundcard & speakers. Windows 95, Works, Money & Lotus SmartSuite. Was £1499. MODEL: APTIVA 2164/91

COMPAQ SAVE £50

£1399 EX VAT
Intel Pentium 75MHz processor, 8MB RAM, 540Mb hard disk, Quad speed CD-ROM drive, stereo soundcard & speakers. Built-in fax modem with speakerphone, answering machine & internet access. Windows 95. Was £1499. MODEL: PRESARIO 3200

PACKARD BELL SAVE £50

£1479 EX VAT
Intel Pentium 75MHz processor, 8MB RAM, 540Mb hard disk, Quad speed CD-ROM drive, stereo soundcard & speakers. Fax/modem/answering machine/remote control/Fax/modem/answering machine card. Radio card. Over £1000 worth of software. Was £1529. MODEL: 907C MULTIMEDIA

£100

£1599 EX VAT
Intel Pentium 75MHz processor, 8MB RAM, 540Mb hard disk, Quad speed CD-ROM drive, Stereo soundcard & speakers. Fax/modem/answering machine/remote control/Fax/modem/answering machine card. Radio card. Over £1000 worth of software. Was £1699. MODEL: M90 MULTIMEDIA

£1699 EX VAT

*BASED ON CURRENT SELLING PRICES OF ACTUAL OR EQUIVALENT TITLES (EXCLUDING DISKS AND MANUALS FOR PRE-LOADED SOFTWARE). INTEL INSIDE AND PENTIUM LOGOS ARE TRADEMARKS OF PENTIUM CORPORATION

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news

Mystery cargo: British pilot among captured crewmen

Foiled arms drop has India puzzled

THOMAS McGRATH
New Delhi

It does not take long for a mystery to form in India, and when the body of a five-year-old son, the victim of an international arms drop, was discovered in a lonely country road in West Bengal, 1,000 miles from the nearest town and its nearest doctor, the mystery became a political issue.

The mystery began as a low-flying aircraft was shot down moments after taking off. The wreckage was scattered over a rice field nearby.

Then several paratroopers landed down and landed in the rice fields nearby. Anandam Gupta, uncle of the deceased, said, "At around 1400, the aircraft passed right over our heads with a deafening roar. Then we heard some noise."

If it were not for the girl's accidental death in that country lane, Indian police might never have stumbled upon what authorities are describing as "an international arms-smuggling conspiracy". The parachutes drifted down with a deadly cargo so far, authorities have discovered 224 AK-47 and AK-56 assault rifles, 17,282 rounds of ammunition, 10 rocket launchers and dozens of grenades, enough for a small revolution in the heart of India.



Kim Davy, Co-pilot escaped after landing in Bombay

When police found that the air-dropped boxes were filled with weapons, they accused the Indian military. Two jet fighters were scrambled to force down the aircraft, a Russian-made AN-26, before it crossed into Pakistani airspace. As the cargo plane taxied in to Bombay airport, the New Zealand co-pilot, Kim Davy, escaped into the teeming metropolis, leaving behind his crewmen, five Latvians and a British pilot who were arrested. The pilot was identified as Peter Bleach, a former British military officer.

The crew of the chartered aircraft are being interrogated by the Indian Central Bureau of Investigation. Described in the Indian press as "mercenaries", the crew allegedly have confessed to air-dropping the cargo but to little else. The authorities are unsure as to who paid for the weapons and their delivery.

At first, suspicions centred on a secretive Hindu monastic order, the Ananda Marg, whose "global headquarters" is not far from Purulia district in West Bengal, where the arms were dropped. In a raid on their monastery, 11 Ananda Marg monks have been arrested, including three Americans, a Greek and an Irishman. No arms were found, and the sect has denied any involvement in the arms cache. Some Ananda Marg monks claim they are being harassed by the state's Communist government.

In the lawless borderland of Bengal and Bihar, there are any number of other suspects desperate for arms. This backward area of India is in the throes of a caste war between feudal landlords and peasants. Some outfit call themselves Maoist guerrillas, while others prefer the anarchist tag. But no matter what name they go by, everybody has guns. Some officials think the arms might have been used to sabotage elections next April. However, most of these peasants use rusty, hand-made muskets. They are too poor and lack the international connections for a shopping trip around the arms bazaar of the Far East, as these smugglers have done. Privately some Indian officials are blaming the country's neighbour and foe, Pakistan, for arranging the shipment. The Latvians are said to have spent two months in Karachi before they flew to the Far East, picking up the weapons along the way.

New Delhi authorities also pointed out that the plane was bound for Karachi using evasive manoeuvres when it was intercepted by Indian fighter planes.

Police set out for a house-to-house search in villages around Purulia for weapons yesterday.

A senior government official, who did not want to be named, told reporters a breakthrough had been made in identifying the intended recipients but declined to identify them.

Police suspect local villagers may have recovered some of the arms to sell on the black market.



Tragic reunion: Mourning women over the remains of a South Korean fisherman who strayed into Northern waters earlier this year. Five others were released unharmed

Fishermen are bait for Korean rice aid

PAUL SHIN
of Associated Press

Seoul — Five South Korean fishermen, caught in a political tug-of-war for nearly seven months, made an emotional return home yesterday after being freed by North Korea.

The release appeared to be a gesture by the impoverished North to improve relations, which could set the stage for the Communist country to seek more rice aid from the South.

Dressed in suits, the men looked healthy as they crossed the Military Demarcation Line at 4 pm after shaking hands with North Korean military officials and waving farewell. "Thank you; we cannot forget your hospitality," one shouted.

The cremated remains of three crewmen were handed over to South Korean Red Cross representatives. After medical checks, the survivors were reunited with weeping relatives outside the South Korean border village of Panmunjom. One survivor, Park Jae Yol, said: "I never thought I would get back home alive." The fisherman said they had been interrogated but not mistreated.

Seoul shipped 50,000 tons of rice earlier this year but halted deliveries in October after President Kim Young Sam failed to secure the release of the boat and its crew.

Bondi revellers erupt into riot

REG GRATTON
of Reuters

Sydney — Rioting came to Bondi beach early yesterday as Australian police clashed with hundreds of Christmas revellers, police said.

Two policemen were slightly hurt as officers were struck by bottles, stones and other objects thrown by revellers, many of them drunk, a spokesman said.

There were no arrests but the thousands of pounds worth of damage and tons of rubbish left on the beach prompted official threats to ban the traditional Christmas Day party.

The festivities attracted more than 20,000 people, many of them foreigners. The daytime party was peaceful, in contrast to previous years. But scores of riot police were called late on Monday after brawling broke out and crowds attacked a bus and police and private cars. The bus passengers were lucky to escape unharmed when revellers tried to overturn the vehicle. The driver escaped by steering his bus through the crowds.

A police spokesman blamed the fighting on "troublemakers" from the suburbs who were looking for violence.

Bondi's police patrol commander, Dick Baker, said he was considering whether to end the annual beach party, which has become a major Christmas attraction in the city.

Alcohol regulations at the beach could also be considered, he said. "The international backpackers, because of their [party] day, created an audience and this probably caused the problem," Mr Baker said.

A crowd of about 3,000 had converged on Bondi late on Monday after the beach party where tourists, backpackers and locals had gathered in the sun to drink and frolic in the surf.

The wild scenes of previous years were largely absent, thanks to a heavy police presence. The situation changed as night fell and police had to call for reinforcements in riot gear. They cleared the crowds by about 1.30am. Mr Baker said no rioters were arrested, to avoid exacerbating the situation.

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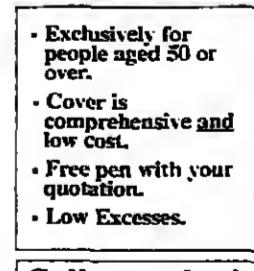
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the sales

SALES GUIDE: WHERE TO FIND WHAT AND WHEN

STARTING TODAY

DEPARTMENT STORES

Debenhams
Branches throughout England and Wales. 334-348 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-580 3000). General customer information (0171-408 3333). Will last for about two weeks.

Fenwick
63 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-629 9161) and stores in Brent Cross, Windsor, Leicester, York, Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells. At Bond Street, Mondi collections will be reduced by 30-50 per cent; Fenn Wright & Mason, Betty Barclay collections by up to 50 per cent, and 30 per cent off Weekend Collections. Reductions at Brent Cross include up to 50 per cent off French Connection, Jacques Vert and Bianca; 50 per cent off leather handbags and selected jewellery by Monet, Ciro and Napier. (Newcastle sale starts tomorrow.)

Harvey Nichols
109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (0171-255 5000). Will last around two to three weeks. Account customers get an additional 10 per cent off the sale price for the first four days. Specific bargains are a secret, but expect reductions to be up to 50 per cent off selected items throughout the store.

House of Fraser
(England and Wales.) For store sites, ring 0171-963 2236. Bargains in the cookshop include 40 per cent off Le Creuset cast iron cookware in American green and burgundy and 30 per cent off Judge

satin stainless steel cookware.

Liberty
Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 1234) and branches nationwide. Join the hordes sniffing out fabric bargains such as printed Armani silk down from £89.95 to £25. Liberty printed silk from £14.95 to £10 and Liberty Veruna wool from £22 to £15. Jean Paul Gaultier jewellery is half price. Pewter-framed mirrors are half price from £50 to £29.

Marks & Spencer
Customer inquiries (0171-935 4422). End-of-season clearance at branches nationwide.

Selfridges
Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 1254). Will last about a month. Armchair browsers can check out sale bargains in Selfridges Selection mail order catalogue, available now (0800 101101). The first week is Selfridges' busiest of the year. If you choose to join the 85,000 due through the doors on the first day, expect to battle for discounts from designer labels, furniture and china to carpets.

CLOTHES

Aquascutum
100 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6090). Reductions of 30-75 per cent off selected items.

Austin Reed
Regent Street, London W1 (0171-734 6789) and nationwide. Will last around two to three weeks. Account customers can take advantage of an extra 5 per cent discount on sale prices on the first three days.

Joseph

77 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-923 9500). To beginning of February. Reductions from 30 per cent.

Laura Ashley
Branches nationwide. Inquiry number 01686 622116. Began 26 December in Scot-

land. Between 20 per cent and 50 per cent off selected items.

Racing Green
193 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-437 4300), 33 King Street, Manchester (0161-835 3022). Unit F1, Bentall Centre, Kingston-upon-Thames.

Inquiries on 0171-581 2151.

Surrey (0181-546 2224). A sale catalogue can be obtained on 0345 331177.

The Scotch House
2 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge, London SW1: 84-86 Regent Street, London W1, and 64 Buchanan Street, Glasgow.

Inquiries on 0171-581 2151.

Reductions of 30 to 40 per cent.

SHOES

Church's
Branches throughout the country. Central inquiry number is 01323 649408. Some styles reduced by more than 50 per cent. Church Bellini men's shoes down from £199 to £99, ladies' lily-style high-heeled boot reduced from £120 to £60.

Jones Bootmakers

Branches throughout the country. Inquiry number is 01323 649408.

Pied à Terre

32 Neal Street, London WC2 (0171-340 8148) and branches nationwide. Reductions include court shoes reduced from £79 to £40, pumps £65 to £30 and long boots from £95 to £50.

Red or Dead

1 & 23 Thomas Neal's, Earsham Street, London WC2 (0171-340 5576) and branches nationwide. General inquiries (0171-937 3137). Will last for about a month. Selected stock reduced by 50 per cent. Sixties-style knee-length nylon boots in gold, black or rust reduced from £120 to £60.

Small and Tall Shoe Shop
Inquiries (0171 723 5321). To 6 January. Sale of women's shoes in large or small sizes.

HOMES AND INTERIORS

The General Trading Company, 10 Argyle Street, Bath (01225-461507) and 2-4 Dyer Street, Cirencester (01285-652314). To end of January. Save up to 30 per cent on this clear-out. Selected cushions reduced from £52.10 to £36.47, quilted cotton bedspreads from £180 to £135 and Kelim stools from £640 to £500.

Heal's
196 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 (0171-636 1666), 234 King's Road and Tungate, Guildford.

Look for greatly reduced one-off pieces of furniture that are either shop-soiled, damaged or buyers' samples, along with little luxuries like a Heal's band-made Avon bed (£51) reduced from £2,495 to £1,870.

Purves & Purves

80-81 and 83 Tottenham Court Road, London W1 (0171-580 8223). Up to 40 per cent off ex-display and discontinued lines. Special orders will be reduced by 10 per cent on items over £500.

MISCELLANEOUS

Buyers & Sellers

120-122 Ladbroke Grove, London W10 (0171-229 1947).

Dial-a-bargain sale of domestic appliances runs from 27 Dec until 31 Jan. The idea is that you name the item - brand, model number and ring up for a sale price quotation. Special offers include: Neff table dishwashers, £189. De Dietrich stainless steel gas hobs, £117.

The Pier

At stores around the country.

To 21 January. Customer inquiries 0171-351 7100.

Christmas merchandise is reduced to clear. Other merchandise at half price or less includes china ranges, marble kitchen ware, selected terracotta and a range of vases.

Ikea

2 Drury Way, North Circular Road, London NW10 (0181-208 5600) and branches in Croydon, Birmingham, Gates-

head, Leeds and Warrington. Up to 50 per cent savings throughout the store including black leather three-seat sofa from £335 to £249.

Rhode Design
65 Cross Street, London N1 (0171-354 9933). Ten per cent of all ranges of mdf kitchen furniture; 60cm wall cupboard reduced from £195 to £175.50.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Body Shop
First nationwide sale. To 13 January. Customer services 01903-731500. Products range from Seaweed & Birch shampoo (reduced from £1.25 to 60p) to Mamato Baby Bottom (reduced from £2 to £1).

Olympus
301 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-409 2619) and at stores nationwide. Discounted goods include the Kastle bike. Degree 3.5 - was £299.99, now £240.

STARTING TOMORROW

DEPARTMENT STORES

Fenwick
Sale at the large Newcastle branch starts.

Fortnum & Mason
181 Piccadilly, London W1 (0171-734 8040).

John Lewis Partnership
278-306 Oxford Street, London W1 (0171-629 7711) and at the following branches - Peter Jones, Sloane Square; John Lewis, Brent Cross; Bainbridge, Newcastle; John Lewis, Cheam; John Lewis, High Wycombe; John Lewis, Aberdeen and John Lewis, Edinburgh. Will last 10 days.

CLOTHES

Space NK
11am start. 41 Thomas Neal's, Earsham Street, London WC2 (0171-379 7030). Up to 40 per cent off designer labels and accessories including Clements Ribeiro, Future Ozbek, Alberto Biani, Soap Studio, Liza Bruce and Fenn Wright & Manson.

HOMES AND INTERIORS

Crucial Trading
77 Westbourne Park Road, London W2 (0171-221 9000) and 4 St Barnabas Street, Pimlico Green, London SW1 (0171-221 9000). To 28 February. Fifty per cent reduction on certain floor coverings, including Old School Group Cuir (now £6.38/sq m) and Candy Stripe Liquorice Sisal (now £11.15/sq m). Twenty-five per cent off seagrass floorings and a 20 per cent reduction on everything else.

Miscellaneous

Crossways, Church, Farnham, Surrey (01428 714014). To 13 January. Sells decorative bathroom and kitchen objects. Some large discounts, including complete marble bathroom suites reduced from £2,500 to £800.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Pukka Palace
174 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 (0171-254 0000). To 28 January. Twenty per cent off their Anglo-Indian furniture and accessories.

Tridias
From 1 January to 14 February. At 124 Walcot Street, Bath (01255 469455). Ring for other branches. Up to 50 per cent off good-quality toys.



Habitat sale starts today



لهم اعذن

calendar of world sport for 1996

MOTOR RACING		
British Grand Prix Le Mans 24hr	Silverstone, 14 July	Wales v Scotland
RAC Rally	14 June	France v Ireland
University Boat Race	Chester, 24-27 Nov	Scotland v England
SHAMMY LEAGUE	6 April	Ireland v Wales
Drag Trophy Final	Huddersfield, 13 Jan	England v Ireland
Stile Carr Cup Final	Wembley, 27 April	Wales v France
BUNNY UNION		
Five Nations' Championship		
Ireland v Scotland	Dublin, 20 Jan	Australian Open
France v England	Paris, 20 Jan	French Open
England v Wales	Twickenham, 3 Feb	Wimbledon
Scotland v France	Murrayfield, 3 Feb	US Open

World Championships Sheffield, 20 April-6 May

TENNIS Melbourne, 15-28 Jan

Paris, 27 May-9 June

24 Jun-7 July

New York, 26 Aug-8 Sept

June

2 Motor racing Spanish Grand Prix, Barcelona

5 Golf English Open Seniors Championships (to 7), West Lancs and Ormskirk

6 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Rome

7 Equestrian Royal International Horse Show (to 14), Hickstead

8 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Stockholm

10 Golf Scottish Open (to 13), Carnoustie

11 Swimming National Championship (to 14), Leeds

12 Equestrian Royal International Horse Show (to 14), Hickstead

13 Horse racing The Oaks, Epsom

14 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Moscow

15 Golf US Open, Birmingham, Alabama; Jersey Open, La Mole; women's Swiss Open, Maison Blanche, Geneva (to 16);

16 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Le Mans 24-hour race (to 15)

17 Sailing Singlehanded Transatlantic race starts, Plymouth

18 Motor racing Canadian Grand Prix, Montreal

19 Tennis Stella Artois Grass Court Championships, Queen's Club, London; Women's DFS Classic (to 16), Edgbaston

20 Golf US Open, Birmingham, Alabama; Jersey Open, La Mole; women's Swiss Open, Maison Blanche, Geneva (to 16);

21 Athletics National Championships (to 16), Birmingham

22 Motor racing Le Mans 24-hour race (to 15)

23 Sailing Singlehanded Transatlantic race starts, Plymouth

24 Motor racing Canadian Grand Prix, Montreal

25 Tennis Women's Direct Line Insurance Championships, Eastbourne; Men's Nottingham Open (to 22)

26 Sailing Etchil 22 World Championships (to 26), Cowes

27 Horse racing Royal Ascot (to 21)

28 Gold Evin Masters (to 22), Royal Evin, France

29 Cricket England v India, Second Test (to 24), Lord's

30 Golf BMW International Open (to 25), Munich

31 Cycling European Road race Championships, Isle of Man

32 Golf Curtis Cup (to 22), Killarney

33 Gymnastics World Championships (to 23), Budapest

34 Rowing Henley Women's Regatta (to 23)

35 Sailing Etchil 22 World Championships (to 26), Cowes

36 Horse racing King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes, Ascot

37 Gold English Amateur Championship (to 3 Aug), Notts Hollinsell

38 Tennis Men's tournament (to 4 Aug), Amsterdam

39 Horse racing Glorious Goodwood (to 5 Aug)

40 Tennis Wimbledon (to 7 July)

41 Cricket England v India, First Test, England v New Zealand (to 27), Scarborough

42 Equestrian German Nations Cup Show (to 30), Aachen

43 Gold Women's British Open Amateur Championship (to 30), Royal Portrush

44 Sailing European Clay Target Championships (to 3 July), Jallala, Estonia

45 Sailing Kiel Week (to 30)

46 Tennis Wimbleton (to 7 July)

47 Cricket England v India, First Test, England v New Zealand (to 27), Scarborough

48 Gold Volvo PGA Championship (to 27), Wentworth

49 Equestrian British Nations Cup Show, Hickstead, Sussex

50 Cycling National Track Championships (to 27), Manchester

51 Hockey European Club Championship (to 27), Stirling Bristol Festival of the Sea (to 27)

52 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

53 Tennis Women's World Doubles Cup (to 25), Edinburg

54 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Headingley

55 Football Endleigh League Third Division play-off final, Wembley

56 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

57 Sailing Henley Royal Regatta and World Cup (to 7)

58 Cricket Women's second Test, England v New Zealand (to 6), Worcester

59 Football Scottish FA Cup Final, Hampden Park

60 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Atlanta

61 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Oval

62 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Old Trafford

63 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Oval

64 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Eugene, Oregon

65 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

66 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

67 Sailing Henley Royal Regatta and World Cup (to 7)

68 Cricket Women's second Test, England v New Zealand (to 6), Worcester

69 Football Littlewoods FA Charity Shield, Wembley

July

1 Bowls British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

2 Sailing Henley Royal Regatta and World Cup (to 7)

3 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

4 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

5 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

6 Sailing Henley Royal Regatta and World Cup (to 7)

7 Cricket Women's second Test, England v New Zealand (to 6), Worcester

8 Football Littlewoods FA Charity Shield, Wembley

9 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Lausanne

10 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Eugene, Oregon

11 Cricket England v India, First Test, Trent Bridge

12 Football Endleigh League First Division play-off final, Wembley

13 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

14 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Zurich

15 Golf Women's British Open, Woburn; Czech Open, Mariánské Lázně (to 18)

16 Equestrian Burghley three-day event (to 18), Hickstead, Sussex

17 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Cologne

18 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

19 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

20 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

21 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

22 Athletics IAAF Grand Prix meeting, Eugene, Oregon

23 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

24 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

25 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

26 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

27 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

28 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

29 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

30 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

31 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

32 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

33 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

34 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

35 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

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70 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

71 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

72 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

73 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

74 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

75 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

76 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

77 Tennis British Isle Championships and international series, Ireland

78 Cricket England v India, one-day international, Old Trafford

79 Football European Championships' Cup Final, Roma

1945: The War was over. It was a time of hope, homecomings and unforgettable celebration

"May 1," wrote Sir Stafford Cripps to Winston Churchill in December 1945, "as an old colleague still imbued with gratitude for all you did for us during the War, send you and Clementine my very best wishes for happy Christmas and a good New Year."

They were sentiments the nation doubtless shared – the London *Evening Standard* named him its Man of the Year – but gratitude had not been sufficient to keep Churchill in office. Britain's first majority Labour government was elected on a landslide vote in July 1945. And Cripps himself, once Churchill's ambassador to Moscow and Minister of Aircraft Production, was now President of the Board of Trade in Clement Attlee's cabinet.

The War was over, but the memory lingered on. The Nuremberg trials were under way, servicemen and women were still scattered all over the world – many of them increasingly frustrated at the slow pace of demobilisation – and gales were setting mines adrift in the Channel.

Britain was virtually bankrupt – the War had cost almost a quarter of the country's entire pre-war wealth – and a worldwide food crisis loomed, after a disastrous wheat crop in Europe and North Africa and a rice crop in Asia that was 15 per cent below normal. Just before Christmas, Parliament voted to accept a £1.1bn loan from the United States.

Churchill, meanwhile, spent Christmas in London, holding a family party at Hyde Park Gate on 22 December, and going to the theatre on Boxing Day to see *Henry IV: Part Two*, in which Laurence Olivier played Mr Justice Shallow (after playing Hotspur that afternoon in *Part One*).

Elsewhere that Christmas, *Kitty* and *The Stork Club* opened in London cinemas, and *The Road to Utopia* with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby was at the Carlton Haymarket. Charlton were top of the Football League (South): Everton were top of the Northern table. Humphrey Bogart celebrated his 45th birthday on Christmas Day, and the writer Jeffrey Bernard, then a 13-year-old pupil of Fonthill School, East Grinstead, took his first drink and was groped by Santa Claus in Harrods' Christmas grotto – though not necessarily in that order.

Norman Lewis, author of *Naples '44*, was a sergeant in the Intelligence Corps.

Returning to England just before Christmas 1945 after an absence of three years, I was aware of a slump in the national spirits. I had come straight from Austria in the aftermath of defeat, yet here, after a long-delayed victory, the mood was hardly less drab. Food shortages were worse than in wartime. With power cuts, freezing houses and the citizens of London groping their way by torchlight through unlit streets, celebrations were understandably muted.

A category of sharp-eyed young men, for whom the name spiv had been coined, nevertheless exuded unquenchable good cheer. They "knew their way around" and were instantly available as guides to such remnants of pleasure as were still to be found behind the gloomy facades of the post-war existence.

Rationing remained strict and the Government had sensibly imposed a maximum price to be charged for the supposedly austere meals restaurants were permitted to serve. Whether you dined at the Savoy or the humblest of eating houses, the limit was five shillings. As ever, there was huge scope for manoeuvre here, so that many of those unable to take their meals at home did quite well, although the majority fared badly.

On Boxing night an amiable young spiv attached himself and led me to a restaurant in Romilly Street. Here, peering through a curtain dividing the

privileged few from the rest, I spied one of the guardians of the nation's destiny – instantly recognisable from his many newspaper photographs – who was busying himself with five shillings' worth of pheasant. For those of us on the wrong side of the barrier, a well-known Soho speciality was bleached horsemeat disguised as *escalope de veau*. It was a masterpiece of culinary deception, accompanied by several glasses of excellent red *Algerian*. Facing the night again an hour later, a few stars had made a furtive appearance, and hope was reborn.

Daphne Park (now Baroness Park of Monmouth), officer in the WTS.

I was serving in Germany in the mixed Anglo-American-French unit. I can remember very clearly that a friend of mine whom I met there, an RAF officer who had been in the hands of the Japanese, had been in Czechoslovakia not long before the War and had made a lot of friends there.

Bill Leadbeater, leading hand in the Royal Navy.

I was on a ship called the HMS *Prince Albert*. We were out in the Far East and we were transporting group of Dutch ex-prisoners of war who had been held by the Japanese. They were being taken from Padang in Western Sumatra round to the capital, Madana; they were mainly women and children because the Japanese had separated them from the men.

We were going to have a Christmas dinner on board and the cook had purchased a load of chickens from the Naafi: each member of the crew was going to have half a chicken as his Christmas dinner, and naturally we were all looking forward to this. However, in view of all these refugees on board, a movement grew among the crew that it would seem a little

disgusting if we were all sitting down to chicken while the refugees were given normal Navy rations. We hadn't any extra food on board, so we voted to let them have it; and we took our mess tables up to the upper deck – we were round about the Equator – and served them our Christmas dinner.

They were absolutely overwhelmed by this generosity because this was the first time they'd had freedom, although the War had ended in August, and this was their first meeting with white people in over four years. It was only a relatively short voyage, but it was amaz-

ing what friendships were struck up between the children and the crew. It was one of the best things I ever did in the Navy.

Leslie Phillips, stage and film actor.

I came out of the Army just before the end of the War. I was invalidated out – a boy when it started and an officer when it ended. I went back to the theatre because I couldn't think of anything else to do.

I have a strong recollection of that first Christmas after the War and the period between Christmas and New Year. There was mad, lunatic behaviour in Piccadilly Circus. Everyone went bonkers. I had never seen so many people go bonkers. I was with a pal who had served in submarines and been invalided out. The two of us met up and went equally bonkers.

The Americans really wanted to go home and were anxious to leave. They weren't supposed to fraternise with the "Frooles", but, as anything could be bought with a cigarette or chocolate, it was probably happening but hidden from view.

The Germans were very dis-

tributed, but we had absolutely no sympathy for them because we had seen the devastation they had caused. We were very stony about them.

Michael Alexander, writer and Colditz PoW, captain in the 2nd SAS regiment.

On Christmas Day 1945, I

stood on the platform at Calais station trying to board the rubber-tired train known as "la Micheline" bound for Paris. All seats were reserved for VIPs. It was the only train of the day. I had lost my bet that I would have Christmas dinner in the then-forbidden capital.

I should not have been at Calais at all. Military conditions still prevailed there. Stationed near Colchester with the 2nd SAS regiment, with a dubious mission to Chipping Sodbury, I had borrowed the regimental motorboat moored on a local river and with two brother officers chugged down the east coast

and across the Channel for a clandestine landing. We attended the Christmas Eve Ball at the Hotel de Ville unchallenged and uninvited.

We met our Waterloo next morning on Calais station. As "la Micheline" moved off, a bossy major asked for our papers and ordered us to leave town. We got into our little boat and headed for home. Christmas Day in an open boat on a wet and windy Channel without our loved ones was a flop. To make matters worse, we got stuck on a sandbank and had to get out and push – an odd sensation out of sight of land.

Beryl Bainbridge, novelist, was a schoolgirl in Formby, Lancashire.

We were near some pine woods, though there weren't very many to be had that Christmas. I remember decorations being up in the hall, and everybody put a small Christmas tree thing in the window to show they were celebrating.

We went to the carol service on Christmas Eve at the local church, and there was mulled wine afterwards – that was a sort of social do – but from Christmas morning onwards, unless you were going to see relatives, you kept in the house all day.

Rationing was still in, though people didn't seem to care much about that. What had done each Christmas during the War was "buy" a pig from the local farmer, keep the kitchen scraps and give them to the farmer to give the pig – and then at Christmas you'd have your ham. I remember my father going into Liverpool to the wonderful half-covered market to buy turkey and ham, and waiting until half past six when they cut the prices. We had speciality hits in the Christmas pudding, which were cleaned with HP sauce, and there was very little to drink – just sherry really, not very much at all. The church choir came round and sang a whole hymn at the gates – they didn't come to the door – and then one person would come round the houses and collect donations.

I suppose we're talking here about people who were sort of lower middle class, and who were trying to climb upwards, and they didn't go out to the pubs at Christmas; that was considered not very nice. On Boxing Day the in-laws came, usually by train from wherever they lived, and you all had high tea – trifle and ham. There was, of course, no telly, so you sang songs round the piano, which was rather nice, and the

whole place was Jamaica, a delightful island to be sent to at the age of 18 to serve your National Service. We office wallahs were looking after the paperwork of an infantry battalion stationed in the colony in case of civil unrest (there wasn't any). After six months the beaches bored us and three of us decided to climb to the change of air camp 4,000ft above Kingston for Christmas dinner.

Our grub reflected our odd status: half muffin, tropical shirts above khaki shorts, army boots and rucksacks. We soon passed through the black suburbs and over the watered gardens of the white district.

The real climb began on the dusty road snaking up the mountainside. We scrambled up the steeper pathways that crossed and recrossed the road. Sweetwood, wild fig, orange trees (very green oranges) and giant fern surrounded us as we reached the lusher heights. And the solitaire bird sang to us, a high and low note sounding "sweet song, sweet song".

So we reached Newcastle, its 19th-century barrack rooms and bungalows perched on the terraced and half-hidden by trees. Socks and boots were removed on the Nazi veranda, and we were brought beer by a German prisoner of war. (The presence of these men was one of the many surprises of Jamaican life – they were mainly merchant seamen caught at sea on the outbreak of war).

The tropical sunset was soon upon us – pink, purple, light green, blac, deep purple, black, always the same magic, but on this Christmas night we looked down on the twinkling lights of Kingston far below, their pattern reflected by the fireflies winking on and off in nearby trees.

And at midnight we lit a nostalgic wood fire in the bare bungalow and had "borrowed" and settled down under blankets to sleep in the fireplace.

On Boxing Day we decided to climb to the top of Blue Mountain. And we did...

Interviews by

Richard Preston and Scott Hughes



Children queue in an orderly fashion to sign Santa's visitors' book at Harrods. Below, American sailors entertain war orphans at a Christmas party in Marleybone, London.

A most remarkable Christmas



American sailors entertain war orphans at a Christmas party in Marleybone, London.

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In the Matter of ICEBERG SOFTWARE LIMITED and

In the Matter of the Companies Act 1985, Section 175
The Shareholder Company has approved a payment for the purpose of reducing its own shares by purchase. The amount of the permanent capital reduction is £1,000,000. The date of the reduction of the permanent capital will be 19th December 1995. The Statutes, Declaration of the Directors and the Articles of Association of the Shareholder Company will be registered with the Registrar of Companies following the date of the resolution for the reduction of the permanent capital. The Shareholder Company will be subject to the rules of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2000.

By Order of the Board,

Stephen French

Deputy Chairman

26 December 1995

Reviewed Officer

12 December 1995

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kiddies did recitations, and we played charades. More generally, I suppose there was a feeling that things were going to be different, that the forces had had their day. Churchill had been wonderful during the War, but the minute it was over they turned on him.

Dame Barbara Cartland, Hon Junior Commander in the ATS, lady welfare officer and librarian to all services in Bedfordshire.

Both my brothers were killed at Dunkirk, and my husband died later from the wounds he got when he was 18 in the First World War, so you wouldn't feel Christmas was a frighteningly glamorous or exciting time that year, but we wanted the children to enjoy it – I had small children.

During the War I was in the ATS and looked after 50,000 troops, and because I was the only lady welfare officer I bought thousands of wedding dresses that Christmas, which they kept at the War Office so that everyone could get married in white. In fact, couples still come up to me now and say, "It was due to you that we were able to get married in white." So it wasn't heavy gloom all the time, but I still missed my brothers terribly. It was rather a sad Christmas, but I have always believed it was a time for the children.

الراصد

life

Paul Vallely retraces the steps of the Three Wise Men through Syria, Jordan and finally to Bethlehem – through a world in which many things have remained unchanged despite centuries of political turmoil

Journey of the modern magi

The darkness crept swiftly down upon the wreckage of the castle Saladin, built in the 12th century to protect the ancient oasis of Palmyra from the predations of the infidel Crusaders. It was a storybook castle of towers and turrets on top of a jagged hill overlooking the extensive ruins of the first-century city whose ruined colonnades were laid out in clear lines below.

The water had flowed there, the only water source for hundreds of miles in the heart of the Syrian desert, for at least 4,000 years, keeping Palmyra for millennia at the crossroads of the caravan trade. No one knows whether the Three Wise Men of Christian legend existed. No one can be sure where they began their search for the child whose birth was to usher in a new era. But one thing is certain, whatever their starting point, they would have passed through Palmyra. A journey to retrace their steps – or which I was accompanied by two other modern magi, Bishop Rowan Williams, the former Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Professor Heather Cooper, an astronomer – passed through a land in which many things remain unchangingly the same.

It is still a region of turmoil and political tension; it is still dominated by imperial powers of one kind or another. In those days control had recently passed from Alexander the Great in the east to the west of Imperial Rome. It is a polarity that remains today, with an Israel which looks to the west and a Palestine which looks east to Mecca. Outside the Saracen castle, even before the sky was completely dark, a single star appeared. There are dozens of theories about the Star of Bethlehem: it may have been a supernova or a comet. But it is most likely to have been created by a conjunction of Jupiter with another planet, Saturn.

A triple conjunction took place in the zodiacal constellation of Pisces in the year 6BC (the year in which historians now think Christ was born). The Magi had the planet that represented the ruler of the world (Jupiter) conjoined with the star of Palestine (Saturn, which was also the star of justice) in the constellation of the Jews (Pisces). To a Ptolemaic magus it would have signalled that a ruler of the world's last days was about to be born among the Hebrews in Palestine.

The Magi brought gifts suitable for a temporal monarch – gold, a symbol of wealth; frankincense, a sign of authority; and myrrh, an embalming spice, which spoke of sorrow. They are symbols which still speak of life in the Middle East today.

A week's camel ride from Palmyra lies Damascus, the oldest continuously occupied city in the world. Its ancient spice market, a blur of bright colours, exotic smells and hard bargaining, had frankincense in plenty. It was appropriate, for the capital is one of the region's centres of power. In the days of the Magi it was an important province of the Roman Empire. Today it is the most formidable of Israel's neighbours.

In the coffee houses and fountained courtyards of Damascus, the talk was of Israel. For public consumption the rhetoric was uncompromising: "The Golan Heights are ours. There can be no compromise. The Israelis must withdraw."

In private, however, it was all more nuanced. The Foreign Minister, I was told, had recently briefed army officers and Ba'ath party officials about the potential benefits of peace. The Quoate for the Day carried by the state-controlled newspaper frequently now constitutes a message for peace. Only days after we left the city it was announced that negotiations between Syria and Israel are to recommence in the new year.

In Amman, one of Jordan's Christian leaders, Fr Moussa Adel, an Arab by birth and a Melchite priest of the Latin rite, issued an invitation to dine. He was preoccupied with a journey of a different kind – that of the unending stream to his door of Iraqis who have crossed the border in search of help. Christian and Muslim alike, they are not just poor but malnourished and made desperate by the economic collapse of their country under United Nations sanctions following the Gulf War.

"huge numbers of ordinary people are going hungry, many are starving, many more are ill – deprived of medicine as well as food," he said. He gives them food, where he can, and organises relief operations in parts of the country that can easily be reached from Amman.

Fr Moussa is a Christian and no friend of Saddam Hussein, but he was vehement in his advocacy of the need for a change in policy by the UN, to lift the sanctions.

"In Iraq, people are losing part of their humanity," he said. The picture he painted was one that, in other circumstances, would be the subject of dramatic coverage by the world's television companies. "If you want to know what it is like," concluded Fr Moussa with devastating simplicity, "go to Iraq."

In Jordan, we had found myself, real sorrow. The source of that sorrow, Iraq was off the Wise Man trail. We were in search of the third gift, gold. So we headed for Jerusalem, the centre in which all the important political and religious influences of the region meet.

Israel is a modern, resource-hungry state. Everywhere new buildings were



Palmyra: for thousands of years an oasis in the Syrian desert and still a region of political tension

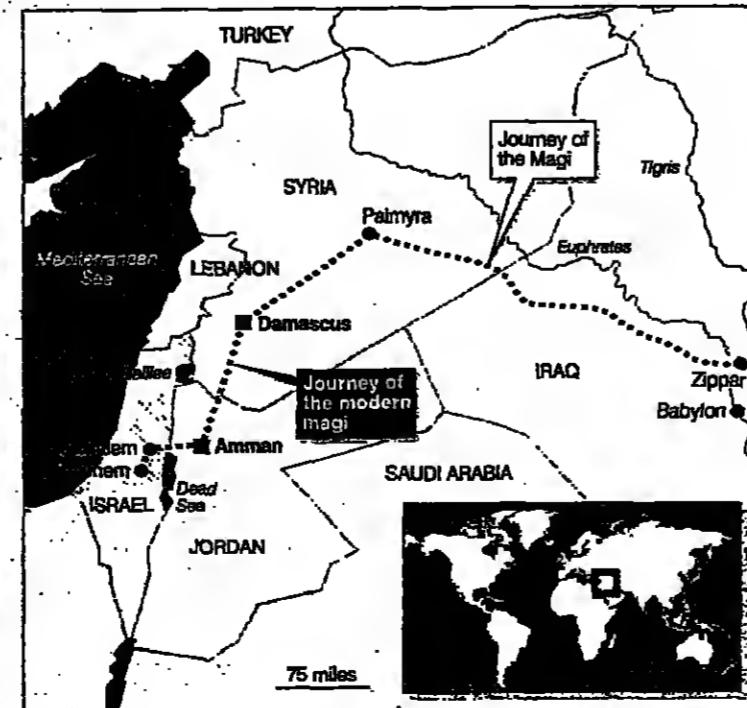
Photograph: Paul Vallely

being thrown up, as if they had descended overnight upon the land. The desert bloomed.

But at what cost? The water for irrigation, claim the Palestinians, is stolen from them: the Israeli take 80 per cent of the underground water. On the West Bank, 120,000 Jewish settlers take some 60 million cubic metres of water a year, leaving only 137 million cubic metres between the 1.5 million Palestinians; 60 per cent of Israeli land is irrigated, compared with only 6 per cent of Palestinian land. And Palestinians have been prohibited since 1967 from digging new wells.

The Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem is a site of great holiness to Jews historically; it is one of the few parts of the city that stands from the time of Christ's birth. This was Herod's temple. The Magi must have stood at the place at some time. They were, after all, "invited" by the tyrant to visit him there. It is only a few hundred yards from the great Islamic and Christian shrine, the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

It was almost dusk; the Sabbath had begun. Our guide, an Arab Christian,



was bronquely refused entrance even though below, Israeli tourists wandered the vast courtyard before the huge stones of all that remains of Herodian glory. Then from the distance, the sound of singing could be heard. A phalanx of men appeared, their arms round each other's shoulders, all wearing skullcaps and some with fringed prayer shawls. They danced, shuffling little steps across the yard like a rippling centipede. Their singing was stentorian and aggressive.

It was as if, here, religion was some kind of competition, a contest in excess rather than a call to inner development. In places like this there is something about the collective religious experience that seems trivialising, superstitious and oppressive. Indeed, Jerusalem has not changed since Christ's day: here religion is power, the subjugator of individuality, an oppressor. A few days later the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin,

– in the past 10 years the number of refugees and displaced people in the world has doubled – there are today some 20 million people without a home. "The Holy Family were forced out of Bethlehem; they first went to Egypt, but even later they couldn't come back in Judea because the next regime was just as bad," said Fr Jerome. "That's why they eventually ended up in Nazareth, where a new city was being built. That sort of 'guidance' resonates in our experience much more than the story of a star."

Nat far from Bethlehem is Deir el-Balah, a refugee camp for about 2,000 Palestinians. Perhaps that is the place where modern magi should seek a child to be born: not in wealth or power but on the margins of what the world holds to be important.

And so, the next day, we covered

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'Modern Magi', produced by Christine Morgan, can be heard on Radio 4 on Saturday 30 December at 11.02am.

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TELEPHONE 0171-268 2000 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2435/0171-345 2435

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Tartan terrors of Mr Blair

Should Tony Blair come to power and things go pear-shaped, taxes might rise, hospitals might close and squeezing merchants might stand poised and threatening at every urban road junction, but he and his new Labour would never renege on their promise to set up a Scottish parliament. That there should be devolution for Scotland is as east from a commitment as a political party has ever made.

But, as we reported yesterday, Labour is still wrestling with the ancient bugbear of allowing limited home rule in Scotland – the fabled West Lothian question. Asked most loudly in the late Seventies by the Labour MP for West Lothian, Tam Dalyell, the question is this: how can it be right for Scots MPs in Westminster to be allowed to exercise their votes and voices on matters affecting the lives of non-Scots, when English MPs may not do so over Scottish concerns?

One possibility, discussed by the Kilbrandon Commission back in 1973, was not to have Scots MPs at all, leaving Westminster as an English, Welsh and Northern Irish parliament. But this would either deprive the Scots of a voice on defence and foreign policy, or would be tantamount to full independence. Another answer, posed by the Callaghan government in its ill-fated Scotland Act of 1978, was to have a two-week cooling-off period on any vote primarily affecting England and Wales, in which the votes of Scots MPs had been decisive. It is hard to imagine such a recipe for confusion finding favour now.

That was why Labour turned to regional assemblies for England. If the English were to have their own little parliaments, exercising local power, then all would be in balance. Londoners, Scots, the Welsh, West Country folk etc – all would enjoy similar autonomy, while sending MPs to the House to decide national policy. QED.

Except, as Labour finally admitted to itself last year, the English do not actu-

ally want a new tier of regional government. If anything, they fancy rather less government altogether.

Return to square one, then. This explains why Mr Blair is planning a new commission to think up some good answers to the West Lothian question in time for the next election. What might it come up with?

One recommendation it could make is simply to stop asking the question. The (unwritten) British constitution is full of anomalies, including the proposed status of Northern Ireland, this argument runs. And there is a great deal to be said for it. Despite all that has been said and written on the subject, it is impossible to detect any backlash against the campaign for Scottish autonomy in the rest of Britain. The chances are that the passage of legislation to allow a Scottish parliament would attract little active resistance in the fens of East Anglia or the back streets of Manchester.

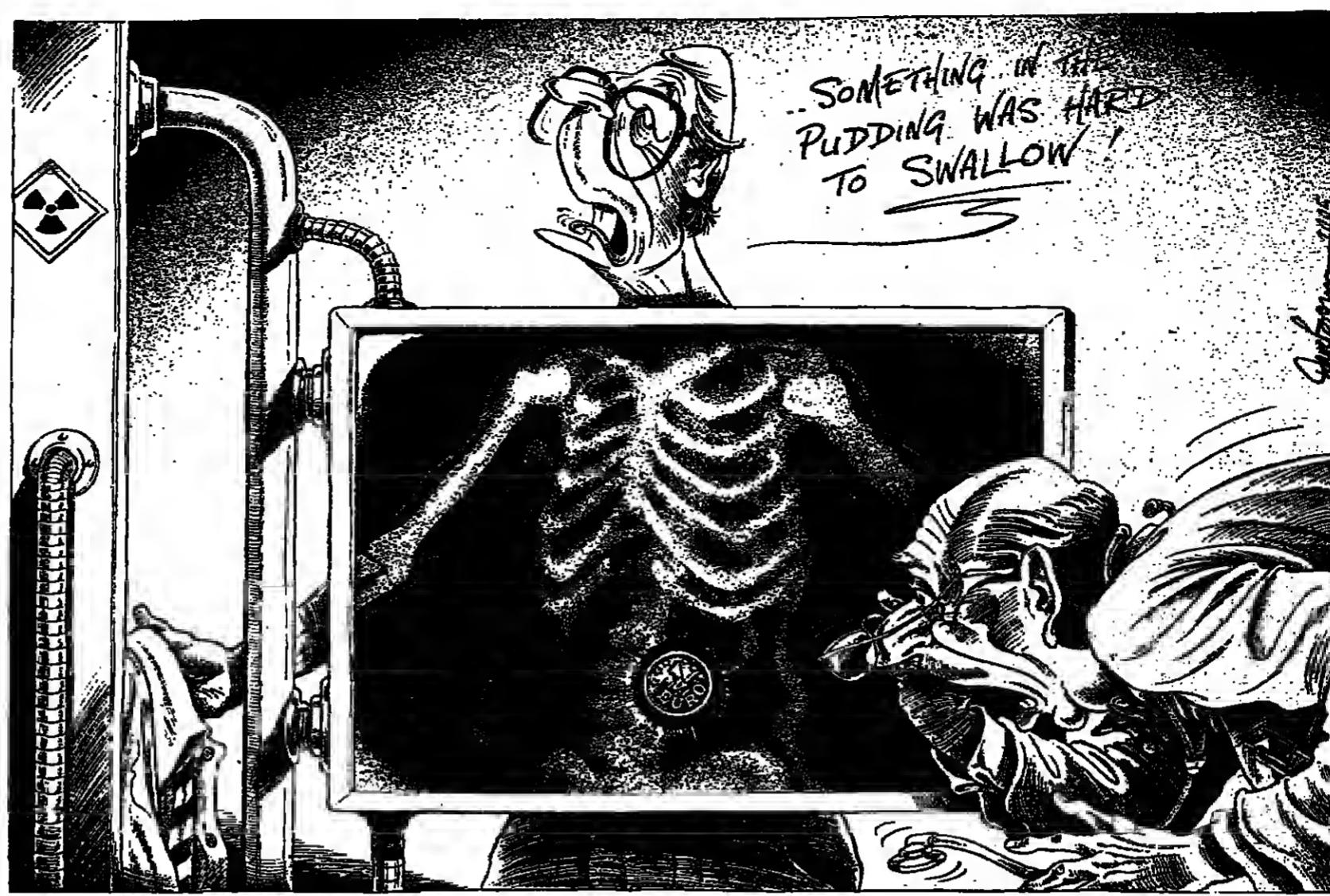
No – any trouble will come later, when unpopular measures for England and Wales are passed with the support of Scots MPs. Especially since it would then be discovered that the Scots have roughly one MP for every 70,000 people, while the rest of the country has only one for every 91,000. That is why Labour is now under such pressure to counteract the reduction of the number of Scots members of 72.

Labour's problem is obvious. It holds the vast majority of Scottish seats – so a reduction would make Labour governments less sustainable. Unless...

Unless Mr Blair's party also endorses the idea of ruling in co-operation with the Liberal Democrats and accepting some form of electoral reform. Which, coincidentally, is what Peter Mandelson was so wrongly quoted as advocating before Christmas. And – as we all know – a Mandelson misquote one week has a habit of becoming Labour policy the next.

That was why Labour turned to regional assemblies for England. If the English were to have their own little parliaments, exercising local power, then all would be in balance. Londoners, Scots, the Welsh, West Country folk etc – all would enjoy similar autonomy, while sending MPs to the House to decide national policy. QED.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cardiff has been saved from an operatic folly

From Ms Liz Mahoney

Sir: According to Lord Crickhowell, chairman of the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust, the Millennium Commission's refusal to fund the proposed opera house is "incomprehensible".

The only "incomprehensible" aspect of the Cardiff Bay Opera House shambles is the arrogance of the Cardiff Bay Opera House Trust and the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation. The opera house trust has spent millions of pounds of public money on supporting a design that was unpopular and over budget. The Millennium Commission knew better.

It is not yet clear why Cardiff Bay Development Corporation poured public money into the opera house trust, despite massive public opposition to Zaha Hadid's "crystal necklace" design. The then Heritage Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, insisted almost a year ago that

The last thing we want out of the Millennium Commission is a group of white elephants, so it's public support that really matters.

The trust planned to seek private investment totalling £40m, but ignored the fact that the Cardiff Bay Business Forum voted overwhelmingly for Professor Manfredi Nicoletti's "glass wave", after presentations to forum members from Zaha Hadid, Manfredi Nicoletti, Norman Foster and Itsuko Hasegawa.

The suggestion in 1994 by Mathew Pritchard, former chairman of the opera house trust, that

"Cardiff will be a focus of the world in architecture because we have had the courage to choose a radical design" has returned to haunt Cardiff.

Yours sincerely,
LIZ MAHONEY
Cardiff
23 December

From Mr Peter Hirsch

Sir: Except for those who would have lottery money at any price and those who regard a rejection on any grounds as yet another insult to Wales, few people will be sorry that the design chosen and put forward for grant-aid has been rejected [report, 23 December]. Many, indeed, will be relieved that an unpopular design will not be imposed upon an unwilling populace.

Most will not care: the design did not capture their imagination. Boxy and ungraceful in appearance, it looks too much like many buildings now in terminal decay. Comparatively expensive, it was regarded by all except the selection committee as less practical and attractive than several other designs, notably Nicoletti's "glass wave". This folly was likely to be difficult to fill and so finance; to keep clean and so attract visitors.

An opera house should have both elegance and utility. Because of the highroad association, it should have been called anything but an "opera house". But it should still have style, in keeping with its surroundings and have wide, popular appeal. Several other designs met these criteria. They would have been

supported and filled by the public. A controversial building, primarily for putting on shows with minority appeal, would be unlikely to be viable and so would not have been a proper way to spend public money.

If Lord Crickhowell and his committee want to win this one, they should change now to a design that commands widespread public enthusiasm and support and then resubmit their application.

Yours faithfully,
PETER HIRSCH
Caeathrydyryn, near Cardiff
23 December

From Dr Gordon Wilson

Sir: I was intrigued by the unimaginative assumptions implicit in your headline, "No darling, no imagination, just cycle paths" (23 December), and the article that followed. I, too, long to dare, and both cycle paths and opera houses feature in my hopes. A traffic-free cycle ride and a beautifully sung aria feed my emotions in similar ways. So I imagine that Wales gets its new opera house but not a car park to go with it. I imagine that it has a covered, secure cycle park, and a public transport system to get everyone else there.

Finally, I imagine that my proposal funded by reparations from those who have so unimaginatively waged war on the quality of life in this country for the past 15 years.

Yours faithfully,
GORDON WILSON
Leeds
25 December

Festival for pagans and viewers

From Fr Dominic Kirkham

Sir: The variety of interesting views expressed by your correspondents about Christmas must surely persuade us that we have all inherited a unique festival through a long, complex process of cultural osmosis and syncretism, which gives space for everyone and everything.

The process is both ironic and subtle: ironic in that the Church, once mocked by pagans (cf Celsius) for having no great festivals, sacral cults, altars or priesthood, should now find roles reversed; subtle, in that so-called latter-day pagans or secularists should want to affirm what is central to the mystery – the value of family and friendship, generosity and benevolence, the social need for peace and reconciliation.

Here is a unique festive time, a cultural event in which all of any faith – or none – can share in some degree. If this leaves would-be purists or cynics, zealots or iconoclasts disappointed, then first they should tell us of a better alternative for a fragmented, post-modern society, which makes room (at the inn) for all. Yours festively,

Dominic Kirkham
Corpus Christi Priory
Manchester
24 December

From Ms Vicki Piper

Sir: I was very surprised to read Meg Carter's seasonal article, "The TV's on but no one's home" (19 December), which appeared to be a remarkably uncritical report of a recent survey carried out by the advertising agency JW. There is no evidence to suggest that "attention levels are at an all-time low" at Christmas – the crux of the report. TV viewing on Christmas Day is still by far the most popular activity with the British population.

The heaviest overall viewing day in the year remains 25 December and is, of course, over-

whelmingly successful for BBC Television, with people tuning in for more than five hours and with many of our programmes achieving their highest audiences of the year.

Appreciation Index scores (the qualitative measure) for our Christmas Day programmes are usually very high and well above the genre average, providing a clear indication that our viewers are anything but "bored" and "passive".

As research from several other advertising agencies has shown, high AJ scores usually reflect a high attention level.

Yours faithfully,

VICKI PIPER

Head of Television Research Group

BBC Broadcasting Research

London, W12

22 December

From The Rev Peter Hatton

Sir: Readers who lack Campbell's "understanding" of the Bible (letter, 23 December) may not be aware that the Talmud (which he regards as a source for the story of the star in the east that led the Magi to Bethlehem) was compiled some 300 years after the last of the Gospels. It seems that the Evangelists, according to Mr Campbell's theory, were gifted not only with "imagination" but also with powers of foresight so miraculous that they make their "invented" stories appear mundane by comparison.

For my part, despite years of studying the Bible, I make no claim to understand it. What has become increasingly clear to me, as I have wrestled with the Scriptures, is their power to understand me and human nature as it was in the first century and remains now.

Yours,
PETER HATTON
Droitwich, Worcester
23 December

Proxy behaviour

From Mr T.J. Cramb

Sir: I have just had a letter from Sir Colin Southgate, chairman of Powergen. He thanks me for my support as a shareholder for his proposal to merge with Midlands Electricity which, he reports, was approved unanimously at the Extra General Meeting in October.

In fact his thanks are misguided, as I gave him my proxy to vote against the motion. Consequently his assertion that he received complete support was at best misleading, or else he did not register my negative vote.

How many others were likewise disenfranchised?

Yours faithfully,
T.J. CRAMB
Wolsingham, Co Durham
19 December

A permanent home

From Mr Chris Holmes

Sir: Families forced to move frequently with little hope of a permanent home could become the norm rather than the exception ("Council moved family 34 times", 20 December) if government proposals come into force next year.

The Department of the Environment's housing White Paper proposes to house vulnerable homeless families in short-term tenancies in the private sector, but research published this year by Shelter has shown that living in temporary accommodation is severely disrupting the education of thousands of children.

Families recovering from the trauma of homelessness need a stable base from which to rebuild their lives.

Unless the Government rethinks its plans, the future for Britain's homeless children looks bleak.

Yours faithfully,
CHRIS HOLMES
Director
Shelter
London, EC1
20 December

Post letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Bon Noël, Canada! Ici le royal low-down



MILES KINGTON

The Queen's Christmas message to the Commonwealth was delivered in two different versions this year. One was the version seen on British television, and one was a special Canadian version done in Her Majesty's very own special French for the Canadian market. Here it is ...

"Messieurs, mesdames, petits enfants et bébés du Canada."

"C'est votre réveillon ici."

"Oui, Elizabeth No 2, à Londres."

"Un bon Noël à vous tous!"

"Vous avez, expect, beaucoup de neige au Canada. Un Noël blanc. Et vous avez beaucoup de luck!"

"Je suis en Angleterre, pas such luck."

"En Angleterre, chaque année, year after year, nous disons: 'Well, pensez-vous que nous aurons un white Christmas?' Et chaque année le weatherman dit: 'Well, les conditions sont en position pour un white Christmas! Oui, vous avez un vent qui vient directement de Siberia, les neiges sont en night-time, basse humidité, etc. etc!'

"Et chaque année, sur Christmas Day dans le matin, les petits enfants suivent de leurs lits pour aller à la fenêtre et regarder s'il y a de la neige dans le jardin. Et chaque année le same old story – no snow! Un grey Christmas! Et les bookmakers disent: Ah ha! Tous les punters qui ont mis

white-out dans les Highlands, c'est un matter de presque totale indifférence aux media de London."

"C'est la même chose au Canada. I expect, Au Canada vous avez 2,000 kilomètres de freeze-up pour Christmas, avec des big icicles comme des bicycles, et c'est non-news elsewhere, n'est-ce pas?"

"Oui, j'en suis sûr."

"Well, enough petit talk."

"Vous n'avez pas switched on la TV pour un peu de chit-chat royal."

"Non, c'est pas éouter mes opinions sur le weather, right? Right."

"Vous vouliez écouter le low-down sur Princess Diana, et le hoo-ha à Buckingham Palace, n'est-ce pas?"

"Mais vous ne voyez pas tout cela sur la TV de London. Ah non, le white Christmas on Perishshire est nothing dans le London press. Un blizzard dans Scotland, ce n'est pas news à London. Si vous avez une petite hurricane à Wimbleton et un foot-slate tombe sur un passer-by."

"Et chaque année, sur Christmas Day dans le matin, les petits enfants suivent de leurs lits pour aller à la fenêtre et regarder s'il y a de la neige dans le jardin. Et chaque année le same old story – no snow! Un grey Christmas! Et les bookmakers disent: Ah ha! Tous les punters qui ont mis

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"C'est la même chose au Canada. I expect, Au Canada vous avez 2,000 kilomètres de freeze-up pour Christmas, avec des big icicles comme des bicycles, et c'est non-news elsewhere, n'est-ce pas?"

"Philip a un grand sense d'humour comme ça."

"Entrez vous et moi, un sense d'humour est très nécessaire quand vous êtes la Reine de l'UK. Tres, très nécessaire. C'est un job très sérieux. Quand John Major rend visite à Buckingham Palace, c'est yawn-time. Non, c'est mega-yawn-time, comme dit Fergie. Mais il est drôle aussi, Monsieur Major, sans le savoir."

"Anyways, mon time est presque up, et dans un moment vous avez un cartoon du Christmas Carol, ou Monsieur Bean fait son Christmas Shopping, ou quelque rubbish comme ça. Donc, un bon Noel, God save the Commonwealth. Nous sommes une grande famille de nations, un message de goodwill partout, keep the Union Jack burning, etc. etc. except in Nigeria. Nigeria a été une naughty cette année, ce business de Levi Sanwa, très mauvais business, tut. tut. mesieurs, mais anyway, tout le normal Commonwealth guff est sur Ceefax ERII."

"Mon petit fils Charles, et cette hothead Diana – divorce! Mon petit Andrew et cette dreadful Fergie – divorce! Moi et le Duc d'Edimbourg – divorce!"

"Non, c'est une job. Ce n'est pas une question de divorce avec moi et mon hubby royal. Moi et Phil le Grec, nous sommes dans un stable relationship. Actually, c'est une petite

relationship. Au revoir, tout le monde. See you prochain Noël. Vivre le Québec libre! Roger, over et out."

capped people can live at home or in normal surroundings, there are some who need the freedom of a campus "village" development, as advocated by Rescare, in which they can move around unaccompanied and in safety and go to day services on their own. To place such people in an ordinary house so that they can go out only under supervision is to cause a major deterioration in their quality of life and to turn their home into a prison.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID AND DAPHNE MANN
Cobham, Surrey
20 December</

We need an Albert, not an Anthea



We don't have Prince Albert, but we do have Anthea Turner. He, the visionary consort, decreed that we should have a Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1851. She, the bubbly blonde, giggles us into paying for a Millennium Exhibition in Greenwich-Derby, Birmingham or Bromley-by-Bow. The National Lottery is many things – a loathsome Treasury scam, a degrading rip-off, but edifying, inspiring, improving it is not. The line that joins Albert to Anthea is a descending plot of national decay.

But the punters' money for great public works is rolling in. Sums that would have glazed over the eyes of François Mitterrand, that enthusiast for great public works, are suddenly sloshing about the country looking for someone – anyone – to spend them. The nation is engaged on a manic spree, a binge bigger than anyone expected. A ram-shackle apparatus, apparently designed to hand out no more than a trickle of charitable cash, has become a vast no-profit bank raking in millions a day. Nowhere is the gulf between big money and little organisation more obvious than in the planning of the year-long Millennium Exhibition. This is now being fixed in conditions of outrageous secrecy. An announcement of site and operator will be made in January, but discussion about what we want and what we might be given has been non-existent. People scarcely know if it is going to happen and, if they do, they probably expect little more than a neat futuristic theme park, a well-meaning Chessington World of Adventure.

It still might be. Given the political culture, the source of the funds and the miserable, lurching littleness

of lottery spending so far, no one would be surprised if this exhibition turned out to be a tacky catastrophe. But let's be optimistic; let's pretend it can be made to work. Let's pretend Albert is in charge. What would he do?

Step one: he would sack the Millennium Commission. Perhaps they are nice, good people; perhaps, in a way, they know what they are doing. But they could be running anything. They are just a carefully balanced, bureaucratically acceptable committee. Not one of the nine.

I include Michael Heseltine – qualities as the kind of risky, cankerous, obsessed visionary this exhibition needs to make it work. They are, quite simply, too polite. Bring in, say, George Walden – he is, after all, giving up the MP game. Or Sir Crispin Tickell. Or Sir John Harvey-Jones. Or, dare I say it, Baroness Thatcher.

Step two: change the rules ... all the rules. This is a difficult step, since no one seems too clear what the rules are; indeed, no one on the commission seems to have the slightest idea what the exhibition should be. We only know that there will be a year-long party and it will be half-funded by the lottery and half by the private operators.

Two private bidders are now left – Imagination, a design and communications consultancy, and a consortium headed by Touché Ross which the leading light seems to be Lord Hollick. The commission has so far said it will provide up to £100m, making the total cost of the project £200m. But, rumour has it, that figure could rise to £500m, making this one helluva party. In fact, it would probably make it the biggest millennium celebration on



earth, a World Expo comparable to Seville – and that drew 46 million people in eight months.

This financing structure, this spread of risk, is all wrong. It encourages the worst possible solution. It encourages Disneyland. There is no doubt that real money can be made out of this show. Almost £1m a year still flows from the proceeds of Prince Albert's Great Exhibition.

That is what we should go for this time round. Someone should already have made it clear what this exhibition is meant to be as a way of preventing it becoming simply the lowest common denominator. It should underwrite excellence. The quality of the overall idea should be guaranteed from the outset, not buried beneath fatally cautious risk assessments. Anything may fail, but at least this way we can be sure of a glorious future.

Yet the profit, brilliantly invested in Kensington land, was an after-thought. The idea – or "concept" as we would now call it – came first. It resulted, among other things, in the Crystal Palace, one of the greatest buildings of the 19th century. It was

also thanks to the brilliance of its architect, Joseph Paxton, a cheap building. Public and private money served the concept and the result was a financial and cultural triumph. That is what we should go for this time round. Someone should already have made it clear what this exhibition is meant to be as a way of preventing it becoming simply the lowest common denominator. It should underwrite excellence. The quality of the overall idea should be guaranteed from the outset, not buried beneath fatally cautious risk assessments. Anything may fail, but at least this way we can be sure of a glorious future.

Step three: give it to London. Greenwich and Bromley-by-Bow are close enough to be regarded as one site, and the catchment area – which, thanks to the Channel tunnel,



includes Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris – is vast. A hundred million visitors in the year is not an impossible target. Nothing like this could be achieved in Birmingham or Derby, and if either of those sites were chosen the party would have to be scaled down to a possibly grand but essentially predictable theme park. The whole of the country can, in any case, be included simply by electronically networking the event. Provincial sites can work, but only on a national basis. This exhibition will have to be international if it is to succeed.

Finally, step four: acquire a certain pigheaded confidence. A member of the commission has been heard to say that the exhibition should be 95 per cent about the past and 5 per cent about the future. One can hear the dull rumble of Prince Albert turning in his grave. The

future may be frightening, it may be something the modern British have decided they are not very good at, but this is, after all, an exhibition about the millennium. If we self-consciously make it about the past, then we are admitting failure, we are taking one more giant step down the road to Britain as a heritage theme park. I can just see the Tudor burger bars, the "authentic" Pickwickian inns serving micro-waved Cornish pasties.

Pigheaded confidence would ensure the suppression of such trash. A resurrected Albert would have the site wired to Shanghai and Los Angeles, to the whole world. He would find a new Brunel to engineer his boats and bridges. He would know that a past recreated is not past at all. Only by understanding and accepting its embodiment in the present is the past really allowed to breathe.

Taking all these steps is difficult. This is not our contemporary style. We are a low-key, ironic culture, displaying what Martin Amis has called "the sullenness of post-greatness". We laughed at Mitterrand's *grands projets* and we laugh even more now that the French economy is lurching towards implosion under the pressure of bureaucratic vileness and inflated popular expectation. That, we think, is what you get for showing off, for taking yourself too seriously.

Of course, low-key irony has a certain value. We are still, happily, one of the funniest nations on earth. But a diet of nothing but irony and under-ambition stunts the growth. It lets the wrong people run things because the ironists cannot be bothered. It hands the nation over to the suits – the managers and accountants – while the rest of us giggle and whine. And what would the suits build at Greenwich? A theme park, because they have seen one of those before.

So, occasionally, even the modern British need Albertian big ideas and ambitions. Our wit should derive some consolation from this, for there is a peculiarly pointed irony in the fact that something as scuzzy as the lottery has placed us, reluctantly maybe, in the position of being obliged to come up with some *grands projets* of our own. The British appetite for trash has forced us to make up our minds about what constitutes quality.

There are two – only two – alternatives when it comes to the Millennium Exhibition. Love it, to borrow from a fellow columnist, or show it. Go for it, or forget it. A cheap theme park would be worse than nothing. A big, confident gesture would be better than anything. The lottery money is an absurd, disreputable windfall. But it is there now, and tinkering with a restaurant for the Royal Court theatre or thousands of tiny handouts to dubious and contentious organisations merely compounds the shabbiness, the Anthea Turnerishness of the entire enterprise. So let's suddenly, anarchically, offend against the mean spirit of the age. Let's go for the big one. It is what Albert would have done.

A war the West can no longer ignore

Brutality and lies mark Russia's campaign in Chechnya, reports Harold Ellerton after a recent visit

Chechnya has been conveniently airbrushed from the atlases of most Western foreign ministers. The brutal war Russia is fighting there has accounted for tens of thousands of military and civilian casualties in the year since it began, and is reaching a new peak of intensity. It has involved the widespread destruction of property and the razing of Grozny, a city the size of Oxford. Russian forces in the republic have resorted to methods that would make the most hardened Bosnian warlord wince. Yet the West still prefers to turn its back.

I recently visited Chechnya and stayed for four days in a village near Grozny. Every night the sound of shelling and machine-gun fire made it clear that the war was far from over. Despite the relatively small area under Russian control, there are more than 200,000 troops in the Chechen Republic at any one time. Contrary to the Russian government's official statements, these are not interior Ministry troops, but are drawn from virtually every unit of the armed forces. The majority of them are conscripts who

are poorly motivated, badly trained and terrified. A deserter told me that the first time he knew he was going to Chechnya was when the plane landed in Dagestan. He had been told he was being sent to St Petersburg. In addition to the regular armed forces, units of *paramilitaries* – memorables – have been established by the security services. They consist of criminals prepared to serve as a means of earning time off their sentences. They are said to have been responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the war.

The Chechen rebels, by contrast, are disciplined and highly motivated. Russia maintains that it is patiently negotiating a peace settlement with individual field commanders who operate independently of the Dzhokhar Dudayev, the Chechen leader. All the evidence I saw, however, suggested that the Chechen rebels had a well organised command structure and fully accepted Dudayev's leadership.

The Chechens have an ancient contempt for the Russians and a hatred of the Soviet system, engendered by

their mass deportation under Stalin in 1944, which made them leap at the chance of independence when the USSR began to break apart. An old man showed me the weapons his sons had used against the Russians: assault rifles, mortars, grenades, an anti-tank rocket and a grenade launcher. "We buy these from the Russians," he said. "They sell us their weapons and we use them to kill them."

Chechen resistance has been stiffened by the brutality of the Russian campaign. Ramzan, a 28-year-old man, was tortured for 40 days after being captured and taken to a "filtration camp". He showed me where his fingernails had been removed so that needles could be inserted into the nerve endings. "They put a metal crown around my skull," he said, "and tightened it every day so that the bone in my head splintered in about 30 different places. The pressure began to pull my eyeballs out of their sockets so that eventually I could see my left eye with my right." Such stories are commonplace. So too are the descriptions of Russia's sustained aerial bom-

bardment of villages and other non-military targets in the mountainous countryside beyond Grozny. When Roshni-Chu was attacked in October, dozens of its inhabitants were killed.

It is the use of air power that has led the Chechens, in the recent past, to try to take their war over the border into the Russian Federation. When Shamil Basayev and his guerrillas attacked Budennovsk while President Yeltsin was attending the Halifax summit, the world's media were told that there had been a terrorist attack on a civilian hospital. In fact Basayev, who had lost all 27 of his living relatives in the conflict, had led an attack on the air base at Budennovsk. His men took some casualties and called at the hospital on their way back to Chechnya. The Russian government sent its forces to attack the hospital. In the process several patients were killed.

Now the Chechens vow to attack other targets in Russia. "We won't put a bomb on the Moscow metro or attack civilian targets," one rebel fighter, a former professor, told me. "But we will hit military installations,

particularly those connected with continuing the war."

There are many theories about the cause of this brutal war, the most fashionable of which is that it is connected with Russia's legitimate desire to control pipeline routes from oil-rich Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Whatever the reason, the West can no longer afford to ignore it.

Economics alone suggests that the West may be forced to rethink its tacit support. Earlier in the year, a Russian economist estimated that the conflict had already cost the Russian government over £2.5bn – almost as much as the IMF and Western governments have pumped into the Russian economy in the form of credits and soft loans.

Russia had better be careful. By the time its application to join the Council of Europe is considered on 25 January, Chechnya may finally be on the world's agenda. It will no longer be possible, even for the appeasers in the Foreign Office, to turn a blind eye.

The writer is Conservative MP for Blackpool North.

ANOTHER VIEW Denis MacShane

The Prince of Darkness goes into print

Ten years ago I sat nervously alongside Peter Mandelson, waiting to be interviewed by the Labour Party's National Executive Committee for the post of director of communications. My pitch was drawn from what I had seen working successfully in other countries. Parties of the centre-left that looked outward to society did well. Those that debated internecines were doomed.

I didn't get the job, thank goodness because Peter Mandelson's period as Labour communications supremo brought together a person and a post to fuse in a way that is rare in British politics. Part of John Major's troubles

stem from the fact that there is not a single member of the Cabinet or official in Conservative Central Office who looks happy doing his or her job.

Mandelson was always far more than a media guru. He was and will always be a 110 per cent pure-bred political animal. In the Seventies, he worked for the TUC, in the private office of a cabinet minister and was a Lambeth councillor – a triple training given to few MPs. In every sense, he is a politician more than he is a journalist, which is why the news that he is to take the ultimate political risk of bringing out a book is much to be welcomed.

Mandelson's problem is that his

reputation lives on even while he seeks to shed his skin as a media guru. He gets the blame for every unattributed story – and there are far too many of those – that appears in the press about some new development in new Labour's policy evolution.

Dubbed the Prince of Darkness, he is anything but an *eminent grise* operating in the shadows of party policy making. Mandelson will debate in public with anyone, including Arthur Scargill. I recently listened to an interesting view of Labour's programme of government which he put forward in debate with Richard Burden MP at a meeting of Tribune MPs.

It be as radical as the recent books from Andrew Marr or Will Hutton? At least it will be a whole book, pages and pages of it. Mandelsonism, if it exists, may step forward from being a black hole of supposedly secretive manipulation to the bright light of argument and policy. But if Peter Mandelson became just another politician, who would replace him as the new demon – whether of the left or right – that Labour has always appeared to need?

The synopsis published in the Sunday papers has the feel of a come-on to hook a publisher and we shall have to see what the published version has to say. Will it be a new Crostland? Will

tell me one good thing about your bank

ADVERTISEMENT

INDEPENDENT • Wednesday 27 December 1995

BUSINESS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

Late rally: Agreement with brewing giant turns tables on chief executive of Granada as drama intensifies over hostile £3.2bn bid

Whitbread deal on restaurants boosts Forte's defence

JOHN SHEPHERD
CLIFFORD GERMAN
and **MATHEW HORSMAN**

Forte will today announce the proposed sale of its £1bn restaurant business to Whitbread, to head off demands for clarification from the Takeover Panel.

The sale, aimed at fending off a £3.2bn hostile bid from Granada, was already the subject of

well-informed reports in the press over the Christmas holiday.

Whitbread is expected to offer £900m in cash and to assume around £100m in debt in return for the Little Chef, Happy Eater, Welcome Break, and Côte France chains, which Forte originally intended to demerge in an attempt to increase shareholder value and to scupper Granada's bid. The

agreement will also involve Forte's Travelodge hotels business. The Wheeler's Restaurant chain, comprises six sites, will be sold off by Forte separately.

If successful, the deal would top Whitbread's earlier purchases of 16 Marriott hotels and the £200m David Lloyd Leisure group, and make up for the company's defeat at the hands of Scottish & Newcastle, which paid £450m for Courage, the Australian-owned brewers, in a bitter bid struggle in May.

It would also confirm the negotiating skills and quick response of Peter Jarvis, Whitbread's chief executive, who has spearheaded the company's expansion in the leisure and catering markets.

Forte is expected to give a binding commitment to complete the deal, which is conditional on the Granada offer for Forte lapsing.

Since the bid from Granada was tabled last month, Sir Rocco Forte has already sold US Travelodge for £114m, Lillywhites for £28.5m and Grangers for £23m, and announced his intention to dispose of the group's controversial stake in the Savoy Group of hotels, which could be worth £20m.

A deal with Whitbread will increase the potential proceeds of the latest disposal programme to around £1.4bn, and

reduced

The bid was unveiled in Lon-



Quick response: Peter Jarvis, Whitbread's chief executive, confirmed his negotiating skills by pulling off the agreement. Photograph: Edward Sykes

virtually wipe out Forte's debts,

don on 22 November, while Sir

Rocco was shooting in Yorkshire. Forte's deal with Whitbread appears to turn the tables on Granada's chief executive

Gerry Robinson, who was

spending Christmas at home in

county Donegal. The Forte

restaurants Whitbread plans to

buy are precisely the assets

which Granada most wants.

Granada's initial offer is for

four shares plus £23.50 in cash

for every 15 Forte shares. At last week's closing price of 635p for Granada the offer is almost exactly in line with Forte shares at 326p in the market and currently values Forte at £3.23bn.

A deal with Whitbread ahead of the first closing date for the Granada offer will shift the onus back on to the Granada camp. Mr Robinson will now have to increase his offer by at least another £600m, according

to independent analysts in the City, or sit tight and risk seeing the Forte shareholders vote for the Whitbread cash. That would give Sir Rocco and his fellow directors time to complete the transformation of their company into a focused hotels business. A higher bid must be made before 9 January unless Granada now asks the Takeover Panel to stop the bid clock.

If Granada's bid fails, Mr Robinson will come under increasing pressure from his shareholders, especially institutions. Some in the City had suggested he had chosen the wrong target, saying that companies similar to Granada would have made more sense. A favourite choice is Pearson, the media and financial services company, viewed as being significantly undervalued in the market.

Key dates to come:

- 22 November: Granada launches £3.3bn bid
- 24 Nov: Offer document published
- 3 Dec: Forte announces sale of Lillywhites
- 8 Dec: Defence document published by Forte, outlines demerger proposals
- 19 Dec: talks to sell White Hart hotel chain collapse
- 20 Dec: sale of Forte's US Travelodge chain announced
- 21 Dec: Council of Forte given leave to vote as it wishes
- 24 Dec: planned sale of restaurants to Whitbread revealed

ITC to rule on TV share scheme



Sir David English: Embroiled in Scottish price campaign

The Independent Television Commission is expected to rule, as early as tomorrow, on a controversial plan proposed by Granada and Carlton to meet Government rules on their shareholdings in ITN, the national news provider, writes Matthew Horsman.

The two ITV licence holders, which each own 36 per cent of ITN, have been told to reduce their shares to 20 per cent each by 31 December. But they have been unable to reach a satisfactory deal with potential buyers, and were still holding the shares just before Christmas.

The two companies have concocted a parking scheme, under which they would undertake not to exercise voting rights attached to the excess shares. The ITC is expected to look long and hard at the arrangements, however, in light of the Government's insistence that new shareholders be brought in. The ITC declined to comment yesterday.

Insiders at Granada and Carlton, which inherited the excess shares when they took over the smaller ITV companies LWT and Central, respectively, in 1993, complain that they are between a rock and a hard place. Potential buyers of the shares, which include other ITV companies such as Yorkshire-Tyne Tees and MAF, are offering low prices in light of the looming deadline. Granada and Carlton believe the shares should not be sold at a huge discount.

Ward Thomas, the YTV chairman, yesterday added to the pressure on the companies, saying that the ITC ought not to accept arrangements that led to Granada and Carlton keeping extra shares: "The Government made it clear they wanted the companies to adhere to the spirit as well as the letter of the law."

Michael Hughes, head of

Price rises signal thaw in newspaper 'cold war'

Fleet Street's long-lived coverage was showed further signs of abating over the holiday weekend, as the *Daily Mail* unveiled hikes both south and north of the border and the *Guardian* increased its Saturday price to 60p from 50p, writes Mathew Horsman.

Industry analysts said the thaw in the "cold war" among newspaper publishers was an indication of the damage down by higher newsprint prices and intense pricing competition.

From Christmas Eve, the *Daily Mail's* Saturday edition

rises to 40p from 35p, while the *Scottish Mail* increases 5p to 30p on Saturday and to 25p from 20p in the week.

The *Guardian's* decision to raise Saturday prices reflected a growing industry consensus that readers are altering their weekend reading habits, and are prepared to view the Saturday edition as a premium product.

The Scottish market has seen intense price competition, with the *Mail* published by Sir David English's Associated Newspapers, selling until this week at 20p in the week. South of the

border, Sir David believes prices could be kept higher without jeopardising circulation.

News International's flagship tabloid, the *Sun*, has been

selling for 25p, but has occasionally been discounted to just 10p for a single day. Anyone buying the Saturday issue of the *Sun* in Scotland can get the *News of the World* for just 10p on Sunday.

According to Scottish publishing executives, the market north of the border has been viewed as quite distinct by newspaper publishers, and price

cutting has been used by most titles to gain market share. Even those titles which have held out, such as the *Daily Record*, have used expensive promotional campaigns. The *Daily Record* is published by the Mirror Group, which owns 43 per cent of the *Independent*.

Kevin Beattie, managing director of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*, said: "Price has certainly been used to generate sales. In Scotland, the market north of the border has been viewed as quite distinct by newspaper publishers, and price

cutting has been used by most titles to gain market share. Even those titles which have held out, such as the *Daily Record*, have used expensive promotional campaigns. The *Daily Record* is published by the Mirror Group, which owns 43 per cent of the *Independent*.

One senior newspaper executive said: "That was proof that even Murdoch is not immune to effects of higher newsprint costs." However, other publishers expect Mr Murdoch, who launched the price war in the summer of 1993, to return to price-cutting in 1996. The war has led to sharply lower profits at many newspapers, including those in Mr Murdoch's stable. But his success in increasing the circulation of the *Times* to more than 600,000 proved to many in the industry that newspaper buyers were, after all, sensitive to price.

by between 40 and 50 per cent for most publishers since the beginning of 1995, and a further hike of perhaps 10 per cent is expected in January.

However, publishers report a willingness among newspaper publishers to agree contracts of more than six months – a sign, they say, of improvement in the tight market.

Indications that the current cover-price war might be ending came last month, when News International, Rupert Murdoch's UK publisher, raised the price of the *Times* to 30p from 25p.

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for most publishers since the beginning of 1995, and a further hike of perhaps 10 per cent is expected in January.

However, publishers report a willingness among newspaper publishers to agree contracts of more than six months – a sign, they say, of improvement in the tight market.

Indications that the current cover-price war might be ending came last month, when News International, Rupert Murdoch's UK publisher, raised the price of the *Times* to 30p from 25p.

World markets set for a year of optimism

... but will early hopes for stable growth in the US and Europe be dashed by inflation or recession? Diane Coyle reports

strategy at BZW, believes that the world economy will begin to react to the past and future interest rate reductions. "[The year] 1995 was [when] governments woke up to the deflationary tendencies," he says. "In 1996 we should expect the response. He adds: "My emphasis is on growth."

The task for investors is pinpointing where the best growth will occur. Mr Hughes figures that corporate investment will at last expand, that commodities will benefit from renewed growth, and that the Asian consumer boom will continue.

If this scenario turns out to be too optimistic, it will not necessarily alarm bond investors, although recession would threaten share prices through its impact on corporate profits.

In fact, the financial markets are betting heavily that they will get the best of all possible worlds. Dealers expect that, thanks to the slowdown and deflation, interest rates will fall again in Europe and the US. In Japan, where rates are at historic lows, the central bank will continue to inject liquidity into the banking system.

Most experts would see the biggest risk as even slower growth or outright recession. Giles Keating at CS First Boston says: "The US slowdown is probably not serious but Europe looks extremely weak. We have got to see more in the way of interest rate cuts."

John Lipsky, chief economist at Salomon Brothers in New York, argues that recession would put the consensus on market-friendly economic policies at risk. Most governments

agree that they need to cut budget deficits, bring interest rates down, and continue to deregulate their economies.

Long-term problems such as the scale of unfunded state pension liabilities in any country will keep up the pressure to reduce current budget deficits. For example, these li-

abilities range from 43 per cent of GDP in the US to an awesome 233 per cent in Italy and 250 per cent in Canada. But if a slowdown in the near term restarted to make voters disenchanted, policy-makers might be tempted to reflate.

Stephen Roach, New York economist at investment bank Morgan Stanley, puts it in more apocalyptic terms. Policy au-

tority could cause a backlash, he reckons. "Look no further than the streets of France for a prototype of how this response might play out elsewhere in the industrial world."

A subsidiary and widespread

problem is that the Maastricht process of deficit reduction will bring more currency turmoil in Europe. Few analysts have any confidence that progress towards the single currency will be smooth in the run-up to next year's inter-governmental conference. "If there is any sort of negative surprise on growth in Europe, policy could easily become destabilising," said Paul Mortimer-Lee, chief economist at Paribas.

However, if the worst fears of

the financial market prove unfounded, the chances are that governments will continue with their current policies of tighter fiscal policy and cautious relaxation of monetary policy.

The growth of corporate earnings in the US and Europe is likely to be lower in 1996, but a continued rally in the bond market should keep share prices on the increase.

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Wall Street has been taking a lead in reacting to bonds. Apart from the surge in technology stocks, it is the fall in the benchmark long-term Treasury bond yield to its current level of just under 6.1 per cent – the lowest in nearly two years – that has driven the rise and rise of the Dow Jones index.

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Halifax paints rosy gloss on house prospects

NIC CUCITTI

The housing market is set to stage a mild recovery next year, boosted by Government tax cuts and continuing falls in interest rates, the Halifax Building Society predicted yesterday.

"We continued to see the withdrawal of subsidies with the further reduction of mortgage tax relief to 15 per cent and the announcement in the 1994 Budget of cutbacks in income support for mortgage interest payments.

The picture could be even rosier, with the prospect of a mini-boom taking place in two years' time, the Halifax report claimed.

"We believe the worst is now over and the real recovery is about to begin," it said.

The society's prediction follows a dismal year for the housing market, in which both prices and sales collapsed to new lows.

In October, the amount lent by societies – £295m – fell to its lowest level since the Conservatives took office in 1979.

Sales, which help lubricate the market, also fell dramatically, reaching levels not seen since the start of the latest housing recession in 1992-93.

Meanwhile, the number of mortgages greater than the value of their homes – negative equity – rose to 1.5 million. Hopes of

Reaping the benefits of the technological revolution

Joseph Schumpeter, the great Austrian economist, wrote the following in 1942:

Queen Elizabeth [II] owned silk stockings. The capitalist achievement does not typically consist in producing more silk stockings for quiescently bringing them within the reach of factory girls in return for steadily decreasing amounts of effort.

Since then technological progress has continued to erode privilege. The Green Revolution has helped to bring to tens of millions in Asia and elsewhere the food security previously familiar only in wealthy nations. More prosaically, the multimedia PCs being snapped up by middle-class families this Christmas offer computing power comparable to that used by rocket scientists three decades ago.

Schumpeter's vision brilliantly describes how the long sweep of capitalist development reduces inequality – eventually. Yet when innovations first appear, they can make things worse for poorer people, sometimes for decades. Some three centuries ago, the development of steamship technology to feed livestock opened the way for massive increases in agricultural output, and contributed to the population boom that accompanied the industrial revolution. Ultimately, this led to an increase in living standards beyond anyone's dreams, but the short-term

The best way to guard against the effects of change is to be more radical, argues Giles Keating

impact was misery, as peasants could no longer graze their own animals on common or fallow land. Naturally, such changes are bitterly resisted.

We are all aware that we are in the midst of a new, information-based technological revolution.

However, the most important aspect of this upheaval will probably turn out to be the revolution in the nature of pricing itself. It is becoming possible to charge for tiny

Electronic tolls strike at the root of congestion on the roads

increments of things, such as the use of each hundred metres of congested inner-city road, and to vary that pricing in almost any way, for example charging people more for electricity during the Cup Final.

Developments like this clearly have their drawbacks. They are complicated and they may be intrusive, and like other technological changes, they lead to a redistribution of income. Yet they

also offer enormous advantages, including the ability to make polluters pay. In the long run, this pricing revolution will almost certainly make everyone much better off. As with Schumpeter's example of the stockings, poorer people should ultimately gain most.

Consider a specific case. When you buy a taxi ride, you get a bundle of services: privacy; door-to-door travel; choice as to when to travel. It is expensive compared to a bus journey, which is a basic ride without these three features. But the information revolution offers the opportunity for all three to be unbundled and sold individually. Passengers might want door-to-door travel without wanting to pay for privacy or choice of time. Parents with small children might need door-to-door transit at a specified time, but be happy to share. A young person running a small business might need privacy at a precise time but be prepared to walk the last 50 yards. Their respective needs could easily be communicated in real time to minibus and taxi drivers, who would respond just as computer-operated taxis do at present. The current rigid distinction between bus and taxi would disappear. There would be fewer buses and taxis driving around with empty seats, so costs would fall and

some fares might actually be lower than current bus fares, even as the service improves.

Consider a second case, that of automated money. This is now part of everyday life for many people, in the form of credit and debit cards or as a direct debit from the bank account to pay the electricity bill. It brings numerous advantages, including security and convenience and, in the case of utility bills, often a lower tariff. Yet large numbers of people are excluded from these advantages – poorer people, the homeless, many people receiving social security benefits.

Meanwhile, the Government has a project under way to start paying welfare benefits via smartcards. There has been little public debate about this plan, the main aims of which are apparently to cut fraud and costs. These objectives are admirable but limited. Ideally, the welfare smartcard would be completely compatible with the cards already in use, allowing benefit recipients all the advantages of plastic money, including the ability to use cash machines. Even better, there would be a facility to create a kind of direct debit charged against the future flow of benefits, which would offer the electricity and gas companies security of payment and

enable them to stop charging the poor more.

Very little information about this smartcard plan is available, so we do not know if it will meet these broader objectives. If it does not, then an excellent opportunity to spread the benefits of technology will have been missed, and the whole project may come under political attack as being too intrusive, putting at risk even the limited objectives of reducing costs and fraud.

A third case is electronic road tolls, which would make road users pay the full cost of the congestion and pollution they cause. Putting tolls on virtually every road in the country would be a massive project raising many uncertainties, and politicians have shied away from it, instead suggesting a number of half-baked schemes. These include putting tolls on motorways only – a clear non-starter because many drivers would use parallel roads – and placing a surcharge on petrol differing by region to fund each area's roads, which completely fails to penalise congestion since it charges urban users much the same as those on lanes in the surrounding countryside. Moreover, all these limited schemes impose charges indiscriminately on poor and rich road users.

By contrast, full-blown electronic

tolls strike at the root of congestion, charging much higher rates during the rush hour and in the city centre. Therefore, the best way to protect them may be to make the change faster and more radical. This is surely better than yet more taxes and benefits.

Such a political programme is not yet on offer. On one side, the Conservative Government aims for Schumpeterian technical progress by freeing the market. However, the approach is rarely radical enough and so the plans inflict short-term losses on many people and lead to periodic, *ad hoc* retreats in the face of public outcry.

On the other side, we have a Labour opposition that claims to espouse the virtues of technical progress – for example, making its *infobahn* deal with BT. But across broad areas, its instinct seems to be to oppose change, whether in wanting rail re-regulation or opposing the principle of rail privatisation. In both cases, Labour has not really confronted the need to reconcile progress with protecting the potential losers. Let us abandon this sterile debate, accept that we are in an environment of rapid Schumpeterian change, and argue instead about the fastest way to get the benefits to those who need it most.

Giles Keating is chief economist at the investment bank CS First Boston.

Bearings man eyes fresh fields

Newly launched investment bank is targeting the fast-growing economies of the Third World

Not too many international financiers would describe the recent emerging markets crash as a heaven-sent gift. Especially not when their business is dedicated to emerging market investment banking.

But then, as Christopher Heath, former Bearings executive and founder of Caspian, a new banking venture, intoned: "In this world, everything is about timing." And he was, as he freely admits, damned lucky in this respect. He had been touring around the world's capitals since 1993 for backing for a new emerging markets investment bank. But he only pulled it off in 1995. "The gods have been looking down on us favourably. If we had been sitting on the wrong side of a crash, it would not have been a good start," he said. "The costs of entry are now much lower, there are not the expectations of booming markets. The whole environment is more conducive to building up a business than one year ago."

Caspian aims to cover the investment banking waterfront: securities, including research; capital markets and advisory business; and asset management. By the turn of the century, Mr Heath hopes, it will be the world's leading investment bank for emerging markets, centred on London, New York and Hong Kong. But for tax reasons, the business is based in Luxembourg and Mr Heath himself

expects next year to move to the US, to "avoid the impression that this offshore business is controlled from any one financial centre".

It may have been a hard slog convincing investors to back his new banking venture, but his success where others have tried and failed is testimony to Mr Heath's standing in the City, where he has raised £50m. Forty per cent comes from himself and other wealthy individuals, and the rest from a group of international pension funds. Caspian intends to raise a further £100m next year out of an expected total financial requirement of £250m.

The Heath name is linked in City lore to Bearings, where he founded and built up its successful securities operation focused on the Far East. At the height of his success in the 1980s, he was reputedly Britain's highest earner, on £2.5m to £3m. He thrived in fashionable circles, and in later years was rarely out of the society gossip columns, associated with a string of beautiful, young women.

But he earned his success, transforming Bearings from a traditional merchant bank into a full-throated investment house with a buccaneering

securities trading side. He fell out with Bearings when, in the early 1990s, after delivering a string of enviable profits, the securities operation dipped into loss. In the wake of Bearings' spectacular crash early this year at the hands of an unscrupulous trader in Singapore, the comparatively

free-wheeling style of the securities business originally built up by Heath came under closer scrutiny. But in the end, any such considerations paled into insignificance next to the complete absence of proper management controls at Bearings.

That says Mr Heath, would never have been possible during his time at Bearings, and will not happen at Caspian. Caspian has hired experts in their field, managers who completely understand what they are running. At the end of the day, the people on risk control at Bearings evidently did not understand it at all.

So far most of Caspian's 100 pioneers are in New York, where the global sectoral research team is based, with the rest in London and a few dotted about Latin America. The

priority for the early part of 1996 is building up the Far East operations, as well as getting started in Eastern Europe.

Among the prestigious names are Robert McNamara, the now 78-year-old former US defence secretary, head of Ford and of the World Bank. Rupert Pennant-Rea, with time on his hands since an indiscretion in his love life lost him his job as deputy head of the Bank of England, is a two-day-a-week non-executive.

Powering Caspian to success, Mr Heath argues, will be strong economic growth in the developing world – 7 per cent plus for South-east Asia and 5 per cent for Latin America – along with the region's high savings rate compared to those in mature market economies.

But the miserable performance of the main emerging markets over the past year, notably since the Mexican devaluation at the end of 1994, offers a sombre counterpoint to such enthusiasm. That rule the world, having poured money into emerging markets, spent much of 1995 taking it back home.

All the same, Mr Heath confidently believes time and trends are working his way. "And I tell people investing in our business, they are doing it at the right time, in the downturn of the cycle."

John Eisenhammer



Smiled upon by the gods: Christopher Heath, confident that his new venture, Caspian, has been launched at the right time in the investment cycle
Photograph: Tom Pilston

Shadow of the mafia keeps the Dark Ages in view

VIEW FROM MOSCOW

In the run-up to this month's Russian parliamentary elections, an unusual image began cropping up on billboards around Moscow. It showed a grim-faced Viktor Chernomyrdin, the prime minister, holding his hands in the shape of an inverted "V" – like a rook.

His overt message was that his pro-government party, "Our Home Is Russia", would provide people with a sense of safety and stability. The world will probably never know whether he intended Muscovites to detect another rather more sinister undertone, but many do so.

For them, the sign was an emblem of the Krysha system, the mafia practice of extorting money from businesses by forcing them to accept their offer to provide security, and then gradually swallowing them into a criminal empire. Krysha is Russian for roof.

Such a conclusion was hardly surprising given the facts. According to the *Moscow Times*, the Government found that all retail stores, restaurants, cafe-kiosks, and car importers along with 70-80 per cent of banks and privatised enterprises were making payments to criminal gangs. Some of the gangsters are even said to insist on installing their own accountants within the companies upon which they prey – just to make sure that no potential plunder is being hidden from their greedy gaze.

You would have to be living in a dream world to spend any time in Moscow without being aware of the mafia – or, at least, their minions. Open any Russian newspaper and there's a

good chance you'll read about the assassination of yet another executive, usually with a bullet through the head – the standard punishment for not paying the *krysha* fees. So regular are contract murders (which can be commissioned for as little as a few thousand dollars) that they no longer make the headlines.

Walk into any of the sleazier bars or casinos here, and you may well be accosted by one of the mafia's cauliflowered cohorts, although it's easy to confuse them with the growing army of security guards – some despite Mr Chernomyrdin's promises, the Communists emerged from the parliament-

have reined in their runaway inflation. The rouble has stabilised, thanks to the Yeltsin administration's policy of maintaining it within a corridor. Some economists even forecast that Russia will go into growth in 1996.

And, in practical terms, working in Moscow is becoming easier by the day (although life outside the big cities remains lost in the Dark Ages). Computer communications in the capital are improving, although the Russian lines tend to be erratic and slow, and often cut off mid-transmission.

More and more people are on-line, the ability to receive e-mail no longer makes much of a dinner party vaunt.

Entertaining clients is more of a problem. New Western restaurants have been popping up around the city like mushrooms, but one often walks away from them with a heavy heart and a light wallet. A half-decent meal at a half-decent Chinese, for instance, is likely to set your company back by more than \$120 (£80).

Search for a good Russian eating establishment near the office has so far proved to be an odyssey of the odious, a series of utter disasters featuring dishes that would make the average road kill look appetising.

But, for the truly hungry entrepreneurs, this won't matter.

It will take more than a bowl of congealed grease to scare hungry entrepreneurs from making fortunes

ing in a café not long ago, when four such louts abruptly decided to announce that it was closed, presumably to allow them to carry on drinking and playing cards undisturbed by clients. No one dared protest, least of all the café's staff.

And stroll into any modern supermarket (past the armed guards), and you'll notice that the prices for most consumer goods are sky high – a reflection, at least in part, of the war in Chechnya, the economy has pulled out of its nosebleed, at least for now, the Russians

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business

TODAY

Companies

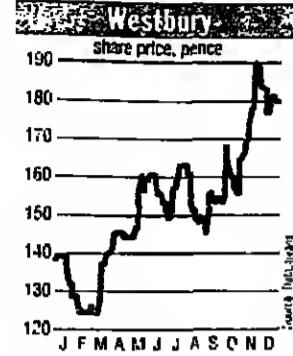
No interim or final results are scheduled for the day, squeezed between the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Intrepid shareholders may want to venture out to the annual general meeting of Centrenet, the com-

puter peripherals and software company. Meanwhile, Westbury, the housebuilding company, is holding an extraordinary general meeting to ask shareholders to approve a £25m rights issue, intended to help finance the company's acquisition of Clarke Homes, formerly a division of BICC, in early December.

Annual meeting: Centrenet, EGIM: Westbury.

Economics

As befits one of the quietest weeks of the year for business and financial news, there are no UK economic statistics scheduled for release. The West German consumer price index for December is expected to edge down to 1.2 per cent from 1.6 per cent in November. Import prices for November are likely to show a further slight fall, bringing the change



TOMORROW

Companies

The first signs of corporate life since the Christmas holidays comes today, with interim

over the latest 12 months to minus 0.8 per cent – more benefits from that cast-iron currency the Germans are so reluctant to swap for Euros. Across the Rhine, the French will publish household consumption figures for November, which are set to show a fall of 0.7 per cent year-on-year, showing how low economic confidence was even before the anti-austerity programme struck began to disrupt the French economy in the last week of November.

Economics

Again, no economic statistics today, in the fallow period be-

between the major seasonal holidays. However, minutes of the monthly meeting between the Chancellor and the Governor of the Bank of England held on 1 November will be published. These should throw light on just how hard the Governor was digging in his heels and whether the Chancellor shared the budget strategy with him before cutting base rates a quarter point two weeks ago.

FRIDAY

Companies

Interims from Union Square, the property company, provide the only regularly scheduled financial news of the day. Following the announced

winding up of the unlisted securities market, the group has said it would be seeking a listing on the main exchange – but only after its final figures are published for the year ending

March 1996.

A handful of small companies – including Associated-Heniques, Black & Edgington, The Brockbank Group, Bute Mining, Conrad and Dominion Energy – hold their annual general meetings, before everyone goes off again on holiday. Dominion said on 7 December that the financial statements for the year would not be sent out 21 days before today's AGM, but would be placed before shareholders at an extraordinary meeting to be held before the end of January 1996.

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Economics No financial news scheduled, but today is day 39 of the Granada bid for Forte, after which no fresh financial information can be published under Takeover Panel rules.

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today's television & radio

pick of the day

THE GREAT APE
BBC1 5.45pm
Human rights have always been respected in *The Great Ape*. Set in a courtroom, the show is presented by a scientist in a courtroom - that's where our DNA differs from our two species: we share a common ancestor.



One big, happy family

Boxing Night was, for no apparent reason, medieval mystery night. On BBC2, Colin Firth swapped Darcy's jodhpurs for a smock and a fancy cod-piece to do battle for truth, justice and porcine rights in 14th-century France in *The Hour of the Pig* (BBC2). Meanwhile, a large part of the ITV schedule was consumed by a feature length version of *Cadfael*, the adventures of Derek Jacobi's 12th-century monk with the 20th-century forensic skills. The kind of night, you might think, when charades seem like a good idea.

The Hour of the Pig, though, proved more than diverting fare, if only for an opening sequence which gave new meaning to the phrase "hung like a donkey". A tragic ass stood on the gallows, a noose around its neck, next to a similarly doomed man, the pair charged with enjoying intimacy. At the last minute, a monk (possibly from Cadfael's abbey) pushes his way through the crowd of execution groups to hand the hangman a piece of paper. "Since the person of the ass was violated without her consent," the hangman reads, "she is to be released forthwith without a stain on her

character". As the ass is led away, the sad bugger next to her swings, to much applause from the audience: a response, you couldn't help feeling, which was thoroughly modern in its misplaced sentimentality.

Indeed, the bizarre nature of the plot-line notwithstanding - Firth, a city slicker unused to humpkin ways, was a lawyer required to defend a pig on a murder rap;

review

Jim White

the pig is innocent (nobody with dimples could be a killer) and our hero determines to prove her so, thus uncovering all sorts of nasty goings-on in the bucolic wood-set - there was something familiarly up-to-date about the whole film.

Not the scabs, certainly, or the bad deontistic or the other moments of carefully realised mediævalesque. These were nothing more than set-dressing (or rather

undressing, if this was to be believed, the 14th century was a sort of sexual theme park, with everyone willing to climb aboard at the slightest pretext. Sophie Dix as a serving wench will have had Darcettes across the nation weeping in envy at the sight of their man, naked, lasciviously signing his autograph on her buttocks).

Fundamentally, this was a production which told us less about France in the Dark Ages than it did about our modern condition. It was, in essence, a courtroom drama - *In the Name of the Father*, perhaps - popped into the Tudors and taken back to a time when they wore absurd costume in court (well, marginally more absurd than they do these days).

"In a world where nothing is reasonable," said Ian Holm, sex-mad monk, to explain the pig's trial, "nothing can be truly mad." Much the same obtains these days in the modern world of television scheduling.

If Firth was the medieval Perry Mason, Derek Jacobi's Cadfael is the Middle-Ages' Morse. Or rather, with his expertise in everything from herbal remedies to

weather forecasting, a renaissance man a couple of hundred years ahead of his time. If not 800 years.

"See this discolouration round her lips and chin?" he said, conducting an autopsy on a murder victim and sounding like a bit-part in *Cracker*. "It suggests she died by suffocation."

Cadfael (ITV) didn't even make *The Hour Of The Pig*'s admiral stab at disguising its modern concerns under a blanket of authenticity. Its protagonists had capped teeth, the monks kept their habits on and everyone spoke in the kind of sub-Shakespearian cadences that pass as medieval talk in bad screenplays ("I trust I find thee in good health, my liege"). And you just couldn't help thinking that when Supermonk confronts the villain with a sack-load of carefully gathered evidence, all effort at understanding the past had simply been abandoned.

"You can prove ooco of this," the bad guy yells. As if proof mattered in the days when men were men and they'd try a donkey for nothing more than fluttering her eyelashes.

film of the day

LEON THE PIG FARMER

11pm C4

Pigs in the movies - now there's a thesis for some media studies student hard up for an idea. The present cycle - currently continuing with *Babe* and *The Hour of the Pig* (left) - was kicked off by Vadim Jean and Gary Sinoy's no-budget charmer in which Jewish estate agent Mark Frankel discovers his biological father was a Yorkshire pig farmer.



Mark Frankel's crackling discovery

BBC 1

- 7.00 News, Local News, Weather (4756485).
- 7.15 Children's BBC Christmas Specials (2372843).
- 7.30 News, Local News, Weather (4756483).
- 8.00 Children's BBC: Joe 90 (5831465), 8.35 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (9074737).
- 9.00 News, Local News, Weather (5177008).
- 9.35 Children's BBC: Global Gatecrash, (8293592), 9.30 Stone Protectors (939711), 10.00 Playdays (0981553); 10.25 William's Wish Wellingtons (5132069).
- 10.30 **Thoroughly Modern Millie** (George Roy Hill, 1967 US). Julie Andrews as a fortune-hunting 1920s flapper? Never mind, it's got James Fox and an Oscar-winning score by Elmer Bernstein (15/11/80).
- 12.45 Cartoon (64251669).
- 12.55 Local News, Weather (1293407).
- 1.00 News, Weather (47495244).
- 1.10 Neighbours (S) (4070350).
- 1.35 Cartoon (15063640).
- 1.50 Greatest Party in the World. Never mind the hyperbole, feel the pop in the second half of the programme recorded in Birmingham's NEC earlier this year, featuring East 17, Eternal, Shaggy, Michelle Gayle, D'Ream, Boyzone, M&B and Ultimate Kicks (S) (2373909).
- 3.20 **Back to the Future Part II** (Robert Zemeckis, 1989 US). Even more convoluted time-travel grief, with Marty McFly travelling into a future of hover-skateboards and Christopher Lloyd leaving the film, again. Fresh and funny (S) (19185843).
- 5.05 Blue Peter - The Best Bits. Look back at the year with the stickily-backed plastic crew (S) (2013669).
- 5.35 Neighbours. Lucy, having swtiched "down" alcoholism in a two-week storyline, has a fresh start, if only it was so easy (R) (S) (2599217).
- 6.00 News, Weather (956111).
- 6.15 Regional news programmes (511468).
- 6.30 Animal Hospital Down Under - a Christmas Special. That's right, possums (S) (530973).
- 7.20 This Is Your Life (S) (532843).
- 8.00 Jobs for the Gals. Pauline Quirke and Linda Robson (from *Ends of a Father*) organise a ball (S) (2626).
- 9.00 **Hot Stools** (Dawn Abrahams, 1992 US). Rubbin' spoon of top Gun. Remastered solely for Charles Sheen's Rambo muscles (S) (3600176).
- 10.25 News, Local News, Weather (917398).
- 10.50 Sorry About Last Night. A romantic comedy written by and starring Alexa Sayle. He and Siobhan Redmond are two middle-aged people on their first date who go on a daring post-pub crawl through seedy London - a sort of thirtysomething nightmare inspired by Scorsese's *A After Hours* (S) (1209733).
- 11.40 **Carry on Dick** Peter Rogers 1974 UK. When the team rewrite the history of Dick Turpin. "It is incredible that human minds can put such mock up paper," noted Kenneth Williams (S) (737659).
- 1.10 Weather (2410411). To 1.15pm.
- REGIONS. Wales: 6.15pm Wales Today. 6.15 Reporting Scotland: 6.15pm News, 6.15 Local News.

BBC 2

- 7.15 **Modern Times** (Charlie Chaplin 1936 US). Chaplin's final silent masterpiece: a naive polemic against an increasingly automated society factory, whereby his worker becomes unhinged and meets beautiful orphan Paulette Goddard (1862447).
- 8.40 **Ellen** Women of the Year (George Stevens 1942 US). Gorgeously lush, almost worth getting out of bed for. Yes, it's the first screen pairing of Hepburn and Tracy. They're yours; they're hot (56219311).
- 10.30 **The Voyages of Charles Darwin**. Next stop, Patagonia (R) (26176).
- 11.30 **The Royal Institute Christmas Lectures - Planet Earth**. An *Explorer's Guide*. First of this excellent annual series, today Dr James Jackson, a Cambridge geologist, takes planetary make-up (S) (473783).
- 12.30 **Celebrity Monty Python**. The late Kingsley Amis profiled through his knick-knacks (S) (54527114).
- 12.40 **Racing from Cheltenham**. Racing from Cheltenham and Leopardstown. (C) Christmas Cracker Handicap Chase, 1.20 (C) Finalne Junior Hurdle, 1.55 (C) Coral Welsh National, 2.10 (L) Paddy Power Handicap, 2.30 (C) Festive Spirit Novice Chase (S) (3481109).
- 2.50 **A River of Sound**. Traditional Irish music explored (S) (6101089).
- 3.50 **Close Up**. Teresa Gorman, MP on Victoria (S) (9152992).
- 3.55 **On a Clear Day You Can See Forever** (Vincent Minelli 1970 US). Heroic fumeuse Barbra Streisand tries hypotherapy, but regresses to a past life. Shrink Yves Montand is intrigued. Silly but fun musical (41663973).
- 6.00 **Wallace and Gromit in the Wrong Trousers**. Again, but we can handle it (R) (S) (176).
- 6.30 **Star Trek: The Next Generation**. The Enterprise - it's frozen in time! (S) (528263).
- 7.15 **Rocky Star** (15945).
- 7.30 **Sylvie Guillem**. Ballerina Sylvie gets American choreographer William Forsythe to dance a solo piece. Then Movement, a film by French director Francoise Hu Van (S) (5640).
- 8.00 **The Abbey With Alan Bennett**. The final cut (S) (730093).
- 8.50 **Another Foot in the Past**. A 1920s suburban semi (R) (S) (418176).
- 9.00 **The Lively Ladies**. In which Bob and Thelma are intent on a quiet Christmas à deux, but Terry has other ideas (S) (394195).
- 9.45 **Hedi Fielder - Hollywood Madam**. Nick Broomfield goes in search of the notorious star-satisfier (S) (231622).
- 11.30 **A Great Day in Harlem**. Fabulous jazzumentary, narrated by Quincy Jones, telling the story of Art Kane's famous 1958 photograph of the 57 greatest living jazzers hanging in Harlem. Plus archive footage of such geniuses as Dizzy, Blakey and Rollins. Absolute bliss (11398).
- 12.30 **Mo' Better Blues** (Spike Lee 1990 US). Denzel Washington plays a self-destructive trumpet in this confused but stylish hommage. Great soundtrack (19461).
- 2.30 **Weatherview** (S) (5128374). To 2.40am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 **GMTV**. 6.00 News, 6.05 Special Feature. 7.00 News. 7.30 Barney, 8.00 Galaxy High, 8.30 Stars and the Jewel Riders. 8.55 Power Rangers (S) (614176).
- 9.25 **He-Man** (R) (8201824).
- 10.20 **News, Local News** (9143972).
- 10.36 **The Story Lady** (Lila Elkin 1990 US). Jessica Tandy is a sprightly pensioner beginning a new career as a televy presenter. Better consumed as a character study than a satire on TV (S) (63000805).
- 12.10 **Cartoon** (R) (3802824).
- 12.20 **Local News, Weather** (S) (5152089).
- 12.30 **News & Weather** (2910027).
- 12.55 **Christmas in Coronation Street** (R) (8800176).
- 2.00 **Stuntmasters** (4063691).
- 2.05 **Cartoon** (T) (7247669).
- 3.05 **News** (805244).
- 3.10 **Local News, Weather** (8620553).
- 3.15 **Flash Gordon** (Mike Hodges 1980 UK). All together now: "Flash! Ash-ah!". Splendid filmic comic, with Max Von Sydow as Ming, and Queen on your speakers (S) (32236992).
- 5.10 **After 5** (2007008).
- 5.40 **News, Weather** (308379).
- 5.55 **Your Shout** (Asign) (221737).
- 6.00 **Home and Away Special**. "Shane and Angel - a Love Story" (602).
- 6.30 **London Tonight** (282).
- 7.00 **Wheel of Fortune**. Take your pick - a car or £20,000, in cash (S) (1783).
- 7.30 **Coronation Street**. The tedious missing gorme storyline comes to a conclusion. Coronation Street can write better comedy without resorting to these sitcomesque hijinks (466).
- 8.00 **Dos O'Connor** tonight. With Frank Bruno and Shirley Bassey (S) (75765).
- 9.00 **Circles of Death**. "Dark Secret". Dennis Waterman plus beard, aka ex-SAS man John Nell, uncovers a conspiracy which leads (natch) all the way back to Nazi Germany. Corine Redgrave and Kate Buffery lend classy support to standard-issue thrills (S) (8843).
- 11.00 **News & Weather** (126485).
- 11.25 **The China Syndrome** (James Bridges 1979 US). Seriously good nuclear scare-thriller, written by Michael Crichton and starring Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon and a tolerable Michael Douglas. Fonda and Douglas are those prototype 1970s, post-Watertower heroes, investigative journalists, uncovering neglected safety standards at a Three Mile Island-style nuclear plant (67226060).
- 1.40 **Endsleigh League Extra** (3610503).
- 1.45 **Passion Flower** (Peter Joseph 1986 US). Bruce Boxleitner in romantic Far East action (S) (328935).
- 4.10 **Off Beat** (Michael Danner 1986 US). Librarian Judge Reinhold pretends to be a policeman (S) (205003).
- 5.40 **Profile** Emmylou Harris (S) (4864041).
- 5.55 **ITN News** (1466799). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.40 **Ulysses** (R) (S) (1646282).
- 7.05 **The Adventures of T-Rex. Not the band** (R) (2342044).
- 7.30 **Little Dracula** (R) (29911).
- 8.00 **The Big Breakfast**. Gladiators Raider and Trojan, East-Ender-turned-popstar Sean Maguire, and Squeeze top the bill (S) (50599).
- 10.00 **Saved by the Bell: The New Class** (5486963).
- 10.25 **Babykorn 5**. It's Christmas in space, too, you know (R) (S) (3093622).
- 11.20 **California Dreams** (S) (6171783).
- 11.45 **800 Miles from Mars** (S) (2178992).
- 12.10 **The Super Mario Bros** (R) (3800466).
- 12.20 **Demo** (S) (814333).
- 12.30 **Racing**. The second day at Kempton Park. 12.40 Bonusprint Juvenile Novices' Hurdle (2pm); 1.10 Bonusprint Chase (Amateur Riders) (3pm); 1.40 Tripleprint H'cap Chase (2m (4f 110yds); 2.15 Bonusprint Christmass Hurdle (2m); 2.50 Bonusprint H'cap Chase (3m) (S) (61570640).
- 3.20 **Lonely Planet**. Ian Wright feeds sharks and climbs a volcano in the Pacific basin (R) (S) (6322843).
- 4.05 **Jason and the Argonauts** (Don Chaffey 1963 UK). Todd Armstrong's got a serious yen for a Golden Fleece, but he's got to get past FX-meister Ray Harryhausen's sword-fighting skeletons, malicious Colossus and watery Neptune first. Brilliant (26202331).
- 6.00 **The Crystal Maze** (R) (S) (94824).
- 7.00 **News, Weather** (1843).
- 7.30 **Wild Britain** (R) (S) (468).
- 8.00 **Brookside**. Eddie needs to flog his motor, while Jackie is about to enter into a Faustian pact (S) (7263).
- 8.30 **The Great Ape Trial**. Should apes have the same rights as we do? ... yes, some argue, because chimpanzees differ from humans by only one per cent of their DNA. What's more, animal rights like Peter Singer think gorillas should have their own country, Gorillastan. Strangely, Singer's not on the panel. Dr Jane Goodall, David Mellor, Baroness Warnock, Cristina Odinne and Will Self are, though, and Jon Snow presents. See *Pick of the Day* (10/909).
- 10.00 **Northern Exposure**. Joel has a fantastic dream. Something he ate? (S) (6621).
- 11.00 **Leon the Pig Farmer** (Veanie Jean/Gary Sinoy 1992 UK). Sweet-to-fi British comedy which kicked off the plethora of porcine parables in our cinemas. Jewish estate agent Mark Frankel discovers his real father is a Yorkshire pig-breeder. See *Farm of the Day* (S) (237008).
- 12.50 **The Naked Jungle** (Byron Haskin 1953 US). Charlton Heston and mail-order bride Eleanor Parker battle horrid red monkeys millions of 'em, on their plantation in the jungles of South America (856751).
- 2.35 **Rawhide** (7839549).
- 3.35 **Cajun Country** (R) (9952225).
- 4.45 **The World of Hammer** (R) (54494596). To 5.10am.

TV GUIDE BY STEVEN POOLE

Radio

- Radio 1**
- 6.00am **Woke Up With Penny**. 6.00am **Music**.
- 6.15am **Mayo** 12.00 **Nick Campbell** 3.00 **Dave Pearce** 7.00 **Evening Session** Review 9.00 **Star Review** **Darkman** 10.00 **The Best of 1 in the Jungle** 12.00 **Mark Tonder** 4.00-5.00 **50th Chart**
- Radio 2**
- 6.30am **Roger Royle** 7.30 **Wales** 8.00 **Up to Date** 9.30 **Bob and Rose** 11.30 **Just a Minute** 2.00 **Double Thrower** 3.30 **Ed Stewart** 5.05 **John Duran's 7.00 Jam** 6.00 **Light** 8.00 **Over the Water** 8.30 **Mrs Ackroyd Explores Her Roots** 9.30 **Carols** 10.30 **Curly's Christmas Cracker** 10.30 **The Magician's Hat** 11.30 **Ultimate Xmas** 12.05 **Sam McGeary** 5.00-6.00 **60s Club**
- Radio 3**
- 6.00am **Woke Up With Penny**.
- 6.00am **On Air with Penny**.
- 6.30am **Prudie Sutton**.
- 6.45am **Symphony No 8** in E.
- 6.55am **Stravinsky's Rite of Spring**.
- 7.00am **Music**.
- 7.15am **Shostakovich's 15th**.
- 7.30am **Beethoven's 9th**.
- 7.45am **Handel's 10th**.
- 8.00am **Shostakovich's 15th**.
- 8.15am **Shostakovich's 15th**.
- 8.30am

